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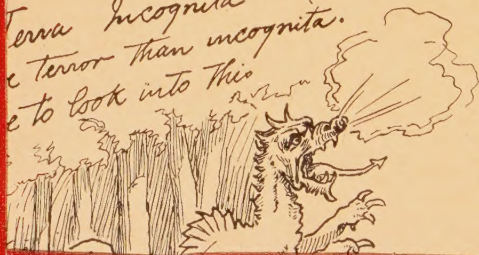
geographers,
 with savage pictures fill the gaps,
 and o'er unhabitable downs
 see elephants for want of towns."



Dean Swift

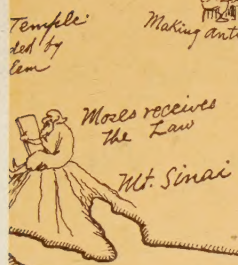
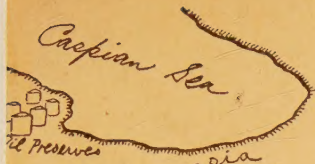
Sahara

*Terra Incognita -
 the terror than incognita.
 to look into this*



Androm

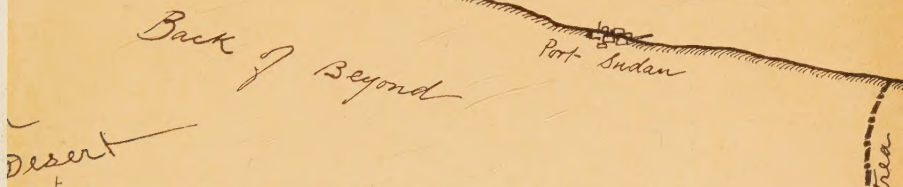
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Caravan coming from somewhere

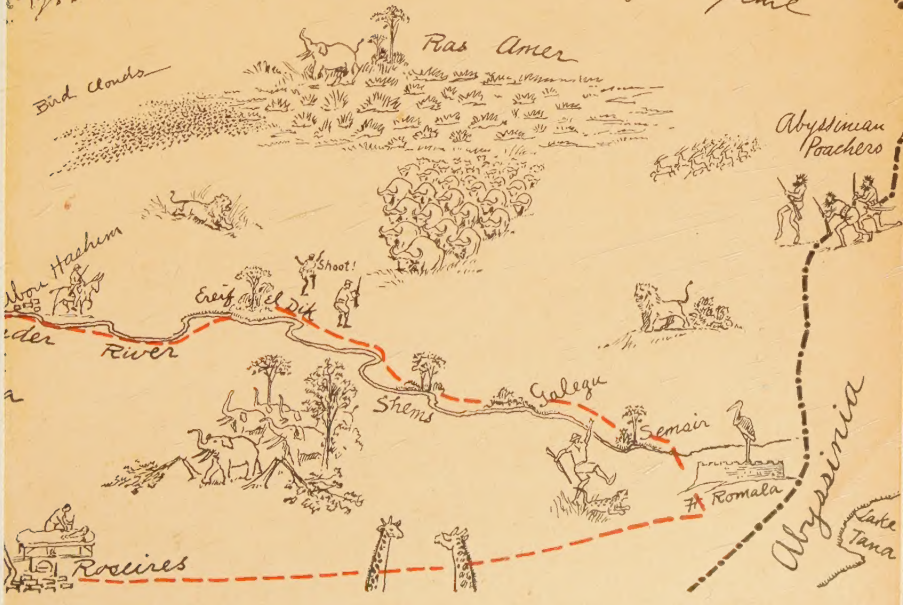
Great Arabian Desert

Caravan going somewhere



Bedouins

All kinds of game




New York
Oct 10 - 1927 -

It was this way. There
were two fellows sitting in
front of Hoguets, Paris, one lonely
evening. They — but read
the bally story.

Sincerely
Daniel W. Dreelley

BY DANIEL W. STREETER

DENATURED AFRICA
CAMELS!



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A Sudanese Galahad—Enough of his physique to explain his inertia.

CAMELS!

By

DANIEL W. STREETER

AUTHOR OF "DENATURED AFRICA"



With 48 Illustrations

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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by
Daniel W. Streeter

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To
GERTRUDE STREETER



PREFACE

*L*IFE seems very complex at times; especially to some of us who dwell in cities. As a protest, therefore, we are apt to break out at seasonal intervals with the "horizon fever," wanderlust or merely the commonplace desire to "go somewhere."

And so we "go somewhere" to escape complexity, but strangely enough we never seem to arrive. If we pass a few months loafing along the tortuous windings of an African river like the Dinder, watching the foot-hills of the Abyssinian Plateau gradually rise and take form on the southern horizon, it is only to discover that here too life

PREFACE

is complex. We have merely exchanged one form of complexity for another.

In the end it becomes just as harrowing to be charged by a herd of buffalo under the Equator as by a phalanx of waiters in a Parisian Café.

At least so it seems at the moment;—yet Africa contains the germs of a strange and savage peace.

We found it.

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CAMELS!

I

WHY DO MEN DO IT?

CHAPTER I

Paris. In which I resist everything but temptation.

W*HY do men do it?*

Several times that winter the question intruded itself. Why on earth had I left the fruity ease of Paris, and traveled three thousand miles for the pleasure of dashing myself up against sunbaked Abyssinian foothills—the very essence of everything Paris was not!

Once, when it looked as though our persons were about to be gently massaged by the hooves of seventy buffalo, the question rose in my mind very vividly.

Again, a few days later, I squatted gazing into the limpid orbs of four female elephants. Just before leaving Khartoum a fellow became verbose explaining that one of the favorite pastimes of

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the *blasé* elephant consisted in its wrapping the trunk amorously about one's neck and pulling one's head off. Though it's generally considered impossible, as I looked into the eyes of those females, two thoughts occupied my mind simultaneously: "Why do men do it?" and—"Are those elephants *blasé*?"

As to the "why" of it in our particular case, there is only one answer. It was September in Paris. The sunsets were golden; the twilights lingered, steely blue, then, black velvet shot with luminous star dust. Like cool Borean caresses the soft evening breezes wrapt themselves about one. Partridges were in season. Naturally, one's thoughts wandered.

Then, of course, there was Lake's cosmic restlessness to be reckoned with. It would have caused the withered bosom of an Egyptian mummy to tingle with wanderlust. Also, though I hate to confess it, I can resist most everything but temptation—and he tempted me.

We were sitting in front of Foquets on the Champs Elysees. For some time neither of us had spoken. Though plenty to see—there was nothing

PARIS

to say. Yet on all sides of us snapped and cracked the language of diplomacy.

At length, Lake roused himself. "It seems like chinning was all these Frenchies lived for," he remarked. "It gets on your nerves after awhile. I'm not fed up with the town exactly—but I wouldn't mind getting away—away, away, where all dogs are wolf-hounds—you know."

"You ought to try and see something of the place by daylight," I advised him. "It's a cheery place—I've been told—with wide streets and miles of boulevards; lots of buildings and quite historical in a way."

He lapsed into silence.

At the next table a young man, with an eye like a squab's, was delivering a monologue to an elderly gentleman and two young ladies. It was impossible not to listen. I would have listened anyway. Even this chaotic, irrelevant tale stirred one with longing for more scenery and less sophistication.

"The population of the whole world is floating." Appropriate gestures. "People are swapping one place for another. New York and Paris are full

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of nothing but strangers. Do you ever see Frenchmen on the boulevards these days? No! Russians, Turks, Senegalese, Americans!

"Yesterday a stranger attempted suicide from the Pont Alexandre III. As soon as he hit the water, he changed his mind and yelled for help. Did anyone attempt to rescue him? Of course not! The crowd became too interested trying to guess his nationality:

" 'He's a Turk.'

" 'No, a Russian—'

" 'He's too dark—'

" 'Sounds Spanish—'

"Mercy! Did he drown?" interrupted one of the young ladies.

"No. A lone Frenchman appeared with a fish pole and basket—an optimistic Seine fisherman. Without a word, he cast his equipment aside and leapt into the oily waters. A polyglot cheer rang out from the bridge. He grappled with the drowning man. Then, rushing up the river at full speed came the police-boat, and all was over—"

"The Frenchman got a Carnegie Medal," the

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elderly gentleman suggested, knocking the ashes from his cigar.

"No," said the Squab. "He got arrested for fishing without a license."

"Oh!" said one young lady.

"Not really!" said the other.

"Something should be done about it," said the elderly gentleman. He looked like a Senator.

"We ought to make up a purse and present him with a set of silver-plated fish-hooks," I suggested like one of the family.

"I think that would be darling," exclaimed one young lady brightly.— She was easy to look at.

"Let's begin now," said the other.—She was not a trial to the eyes either.

"Waiter—garson," said the elderly gentleman. "Another bottle of wine— Cigar?— Shove these two tables together and we'll go into this matter further."

Lake plucked me by the sleeve. "Can that stuff," he whispered. "I'm fed up with these jolly accidental parties. Wonderful people—no doubt, but I've got a serious proposition to make—of a private nature."

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"We'll be over in a minute, Senator," I said.

"Let's go on a trip somewhere," Lake burst out with an irrelevancy that startled me for a moment. "British East. Uganda. The Belgian Congo. Anywhere!"

"Not so fast, Rollo," I answered. "While I'm not tied down to the cotton mills any more, I've been to Africa once. I've had my fling. I can't go rushing about all over the place. I've got obligations, man—I don't know what they are exactly, but I've got 'em."

"Well, throw your eye over this," he went on, drawing a bundle of literature from an inner pocket and tossing me a little booklet. Evidently he'd been brooding on the subject and accumulating data.

It was an amazing little booklet, issued by the Sudan Government Railways and Steamers. On the cover was the picture of an elephant as big as a modern office-building, beaming down on a dwarfish hunter armed with a rifle the size of a pea blower. With businesslike directness it made one privy to the sportive delights of the Sudan. Fuzzy wuzzies, camels, Mrs. Grey's letchwes

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pranced about in a climatic setting that was perfection. There were aard-vark, addax, antelope, baboons, buffalo, bush buck, leopards, lions, lizards. In fact, any animal that didn't exist down there was a lie. It cast a hypnotic spell.

"It's seductive enough," I agreed, "but my time's too limited. It's out of the question. Let's move over. The Senator's getting restless."

"Just a mo—," said Lake bowing to the next table, and quaffing a bubbling glass that had been very courteously sent over on account. He made a few rapid calculations. "Khartoum's only eight days from Paris," he resumed. "Bend your optics on page twenty-one. It gives a list of Sudanese game with Arabic names opposite. For instance, the gecko or wall lizard is called either a 'burs,' 'abu burs' or 'abu kaf.' You see in the Sudan you address a lizard according to how you feel about him that particular day. If you're off lizards you call him plain 'burs'—"

"If it weren't for my obligations I might think of it," I interrupted. Then suddenly the Champs Elysees dissolved from the picture. I saw the sun rising over the snow fields of Kilimanjaro—all

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primrose and mother-of-pearl; game herds stretched across endless plains to be swallowed up by distance; the roar of a lion fractured the silence; a hyena let off a volley of blood-curdling laughter; a jackal barked—. Vaguely, I heard Lake droning on.

“A crocodile is ‘timsah’—a wild duck ‘wilili’—and you’ll hardly believe it, but a goose is ‘wizz’—great bird, the ‘wizz’”—

Vaguely I heard the thundering hoofbeats of stampeding zebra; the picture of black human bodies, oily and naked, flashed through my chaotic mind. Once more I was in the land of ticks, heat, thirst. Then I could hear the rhythmical throbbing of tomtoms; the sad melody of a “sing song” under a colossal full moon—.

“Lion are ‘sab’,” Lake’s voice ran on; “buffalo, ‘gamus’—”

I shook myself. Without any warning, my resistance snapped. “Well, where and the hell is it you want to go?” I asked him weakly.

“The Sudan—Fung Province—the Dinder River—page twenty-eight,” Lake spoke excitedly. “At Sennar we will pick up hired camels—arranged for



Suddenly Paris dissolved from the picture.



Once more I was in the land of ticks, heat, thirst. The tang of black human bodies, oily and naked, was in the air.

PARIS

by the Game Warden. "The upper part of the river, in the neighborhood of the Khor Galegu, teems with game of all sorts," he read. "The camels have got me! I've always wanted to be wakened in the morning by the cooing of camels."

The idea of a little plain and fancy cameleering had me rocking too. I had met temptation—and lost. As I gazed out on the Champs Elysees all I could see were camel caravans and lizards.

Then I brought myself up with a jerk. "This is all right as far as it goes," I suggested more calmly, "but I haven't any equipment for that kind of thing, and you haven't either. Forget it."

"No," said Lake with enthusiasm. "We'll wire the Game Warden at Khartoum for particulars. See if we can outfit there. Then we'll fix a date and go to it."

"Well. All right," I agreed. "All right."

And so, as the two-wheeled farm carts rocking under their loads of turnips and carrots lurched down the hill from the "Arc" on their way to early market, we framed a rather cryptic telegram and sped it on its long journey to Khartoum.

We paid our check, and rose from the table.

CAMELS!

"That's right, boys, sit right down," said the Senator. "—Another bottle, waiter— Have you heard the difference between—"

"Sorry," said Lake, "we can't. We're going 'cameleering . . .' in the Sudan. Got to be off."

"Is it a *risqué* place? I've always wanted to go to Montmartre," said one young lady.

"If there's dancing, why don't we all go?" said the other.

"Sure, I'll give a party," said the elderly gentleman.

"Some other night," said Lake, with a wild laugh. "But now farewell—a long farewell!"

The next noon we met again at one of those small unknown Parisian cafés where all the Americans swarm to get away from all the Americans. There was saw-dust on the floor, while myriads of flies had used a wall-paper our grandmothers would have become sentimental over, as a depositary for undesired eggs. Its name matters not, but the spell it cast—or at least we thought it cast—still lingers.

In tortured French we ordered lunch from a

PARIS

waiter who spoke an English as pure and liturgical as Milton's. It's all in the game.

"Well, what's the dope?" I enquired at length, after this important matter had been disposed of. The reply to our telegram, if any, was to come to Lake.

With considerable mystery, he pulled a pink slip of paper from his pocket. "Here's the dope," he replied, impressively. "Telegram from the Game Warden, Khartoum, reading as follows: 'Guns, ammunition, clothing, obtainable here. Will arrange for camels any date desired.' Looks as though we were going on a trip," and folding up the flimsy slip of paper he returned it carefully to his pocket.

"Chaperoned by a bevy of camels," I added, and then my native caution rose to the surface. "Have you actually got any idea where this Dinder River is?"

"Well, yes and no," he replied. "I looked it up on a second-hand map this morning. It seemed to branch off the Blue Nile all right, just South of a place called Wad Medani, then bore East and lost itself in Abyssinia. It was a wriggly kind of river

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—looked like it had St. Vitus' dance. But that might have been because somebody'd accordion-pleated the map and used it for a fly-swatter."

"But it was there all right?" I persisted.

"Sure it was," he replied, soothingly.

There was some further discussion as to dates. "O.K., then," said Lake. "I'll meet you in Khartoum January 27th."

In passing he volunteered to go to Khartoum a week early and "line things up." He was considerably the youngest, so it did not seem so unfair, that suggestion.

"See if you can't engage a white hunter to go along and run the show," was my parting advice. "It's very comforting to have a laddie standing by who knows the animals by their first names, and at times the natives are worse than the animals." I was thinking of good old Flint down in East Africa.

My secret intentions were to investigate the frigid delights of Switzerland as a preparation for the parboiling that was surely coming to us later. Lake was soothing his nerves with a short course of fox-hunting in England.

PARIS

“Well, so long,” he said. “I’ll wire the G. W. we’re coming.”

“Just a moment, Lake,” I said. “Why do men do it?”

“Do what?” he asked, with raised eyebrows.

“Dash off to an inferno like the Sudan for no reason at all.— Why?”

“Because it’s there, I guess,” he answered, and that was the last I saw of him for three months.

CHAPTER II

Cairo. Explaining the phrase, "I speak of Africa and Golden Joys."

THE trouble begins as soon as one sets foot on the foreshore of Africa. It is naturally expected, just like bacon with the jolly old eggs. The great African tradition unconditionally guarantees it. Some refer to it as "trouble," others "adventure," according to the condition of their arteries.

With explosive suddenness, my adventures fructified on the quay at Alexandria. And, though for some days they seemed purely financial in character, they were none the less adventures, bewildering and intricate. It was then, for the first time, the full meaning of the phrase: "I speak of Africa and Golden Joys" came home to me. Whoever it was wrote Shakespeare, he knew his Egypt.

CAIRO

As I debouched carelessly onto the pier-head that pleasant January afternoon, eighteen unwashed Alexandrians sprang up out of the earth and engaged in brutal warfare for the privilege of carrying my meager luggage to the Cairo express. In a sense it was flattering. Three of them won. On account of their evident interest in me they were rewarded handsomely. Then a most evil looking fellow approached, and without formality, demanded bakshish.

"Go way from here," I suggested. "You didn't carry my luggage."

"I know I didn't—but I ought to have," he replied. I paid him.

An American woman rushed through the Custom House dragging by the arm one small bewildered-looking man: "He's had his pocket picked," she wailed. "Somebody's taken all his money. He's my husband." Nobody seemed even mildly interested on either count.

Another lady of sterner mould was remarking to a goldlaced "runner" from Cairo: "You are all cheats and robbers. I'll never come to your coun-

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try again." His interest was not even tepid in the impeachment or the threat.

As the train pulled out, eight pair of slack-trousered Copts were in the act of slipping half-nelsons on each other. The station platform was a shambles.

And that's how I saw Pompey's Pillar, the Catacombs and the glories of Alexandria.

Cairo to me means but one thing—ABBADI MOHAMMED KHATTAB, drago-man for Upper and Lower Egypt. But one day was given me in Cairo. It was spent in playing a nonsectarian game of hare and hounds with ABBADI M. KHATTAB. It had been a night punctuated with alarums. Each hour brought its run on my pocket-book. I began to think I was a bank—and the kind of a bank in which one would hesitate to become a depositor. Before I gathered presence of mind enough to close my doors I was on the verge of issuing fiat currency. It all started with the diabolical ingenuity of the hotel porters in delivering my baggage piecemeal. At one A.M. the first allotment arrived, when three stout lads staggered in under the crushing weight of one

CAIRO

suit-case. They received financial recognition. An hour and a half later its mate followed. There were now four priests of the calloused palm. Evidently word of my financial condition had spread. It was embarrassing. I don't like so many men in my room at two-thirty in the morning, especially wild-looking Cairenes without letters of introduction, who obviously would stop at nothing. Bakshish was evidently contemplated, for when I unlimbered the wallet they departed backwards out the door bowing to the ground. At three-thirty they all returned, accompanied by several others I had never seen before, to find out whether anything was missing. "Positively not," I assured them. By this time I had closed and barred my doors, so the run was over.

In the morning I must have looked pale, but interesting. It was then A. M. KHATTAB selected me from all the other possibilities for his very own meat. He sat by the front door of the Continental Hotel, apparently waiting for me.

"I am your drago-man, Sar," he said, handing me his card.

"You are as wrong as ever you can be," I told

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him. "I care for no drago-man, whatever that is."

"I am your drago-man, Sar, for Upper and Lower Egypt," he persisted.

"You are a silly ass," I answered, and moved up the street along the Esbekiya Gardens. He clung to me like a—like a—well, he clung to me.

"I am your drago-man, Sar," he wheedled.

"You are the son of a pink-eyed Arabian sea-turtle," I cried, and bolted into the American Express office. I tried to find a rear entrance. There was none. Ten minutes later, when I emerged, he was waiting for me.

"Where do you care to go now, Sar?" he said.

"To Hell in a hand basket," I yelled, and started to run towards the bar of Shepherd's Hotel.

Squatting about the steps were a dozen Egyptians. As their eyes fell on me they rose as one man, and advanced to meet me.

"He's mine," said one. A babel of voices broke out. "Liar. He's mine." "No, he's mine." "Mine." "No. Mine."

"Wait a minute boys," I said weakly, "you're all wrong. I'm his," and I pointed to ABBADI

CAIRO

MOHAMMED KHATTAB, who was just two feet behind me. "You win, Khattab."

For the rest of the day nothing could have pried us apart. I had my passport viséed at the Sudan Agents, drove through the different "Quarters" of the town—Christian, Coptic, Jewish and Frank, Ismailiya and Kasrel-Dubara; took in the Court of Mixed Tribunals, the Post-Office and Credit Lyonnais; the Citadel and Sultan Hasan Mosque, also two hundred and sixty-four other Mosques; the Well of Joseph and the grill of Shephard's Hotel; the tombs of the Mamluks and tombs of the Caliphs; the Gates and Egyptian Museum; the Fortress of Babylon, Coptic convents, Syrian chapels and American churches. I rode in an arabiya; the driver shrieked like a Tasmanian devil and cracked his whip with a sound like pistol shots. In the bazaars the vendors yelled; purveyors of liquid refreshment clashed brass bowls or glasses together. Donkeys brayed. Possibly I let a bray or two myself. Life was colorful, prismatic. The air was laden with an aroma that staggered the nostril. Something in the vicinage was screaming for in-

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terment. "Hurrah for Cairo," I yelled. "Yes, sar," said Khattab.

We drove to the Pyramids. "My cousin, he lives near the Mena House," said Khattab. "Will the gentleman let him ride on the running board and so save a carfare?"

"Let him ride," I said. "What should we care!" And so I met ABDUL LATEEF KHATTAB. We spent five minutes at the Pyramids—a short time for such rich and mellow mausoleums, but Lake was waiting at Khartoum—at least I hoped he was waiting—then Abdul Lateef demanded ten piasters for services as guide for the Pyramids.

"What in the name of my sacred aunt goes on?" I asked Abbadi. "I give cousin Abdul a ride to the Mena House to save him carfare, and he presents a bill for showing me something I can see with my own eyes."

"But, sar," he replied, "this is his territory. Out here you belong to him."

"Well, take me back to that Garden in which I belong only to you, dear heart," I told Abbadi, and paid off Abdul.

As I sat on the verandah of the Continental just



*Purveyors of liquid refreshment
clashed brass
bowls.*



Donkeys brayed. Maybe I let out a bray or two myself.

CAIRO

before dinner, trying to figure out roughly the financial wear and tear of the day so I could charge off the proper depreciation, a rather handsome woman sitting next me divulged some interesting information about the Pyramids.

"Scrappy town," I remarked tentatively.

"Very," she replied.

"I've just been running my eye over the Pyramids," I threw off next. At once her reserve melted.

"They're very old," she said. "So is the Sphinx. They make everybody think great thoughts. There was the remark uttered by Alexander the Great—years ago—it escapes me at the moment. And Herodotus, of course—I'll think of it directly. Napoleon's is too well known to bear repetition. And there was our own Senator—what's his name? He made the best remark of all—what was it?—Oh! yes—'It's a very impressive sight,' he said. Isn't Cairo a wicked, interesting city?" she concluded.

"That's as true as anything you've said," I replied. "Just to show you how wicked it is I'm hopping the six o'clock train to Luxor."

CAMELS!

"There's only one consolation in a set of brains like hers," I reflected as I left her. "There's not a headache in a barrel of 'em."

Abbadi saw me off.

"How much do I owe you?" I asked him.

"Whatever you will, sar," he replied. "I have a wife and many children— I have a wife and—"

"I'm not interested in your domestic relations," I warned him, and crossed his itching palm, but until the train pulled out he hung beneath the window of my "wagon-lit" and sang of the hardness of life for drago-men for Upper and Lower Egypt; of the high cost of wives and their discouraging fecundity.

And, so, I left him. Farewell, ABBADI MOHAMMED KHATTAB. Allah be with you! It was the evening of January twenty-second.

CHAPTER III

Up the Nile—the Mother of all Egypt.

MY name is McFee—Major McFee,” he said, so we ordered dinner for two. We were roaring South towards Luxor, Assuan and Khartoum, thirteen, or maybe it’s fifteen, hundred miles away. The Major was sharing my compartment or vice versa—I’m never quite clear as to the ethics of this point when on a continental “wagon-lit.”

“You’re heading for?”

“Khartoum,” he replied promptly, with truncated, military directness. “Medical corps. New billet. Big hospital. Two years at Cairo. Maybe get transferred into the ‘bush.’ Some post where there’s a bit of big game shooting. Rifles under bunk. We all do it.”

“Thought you were going somewhere,” I suggested. “That was an enthusiastic crowd that saw you off.”

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"Been seeing me off for the last ten days. I'm all in. They're all in. Had to leave while I still had the strength. Great place—Cairo!"

It had been slightly overcast all day, but now the clouds had rolled away and from the compartment window we could catch sporadic glimpses of the Nile.

"There's a river I'd like to know the story of," I mused.

"What, what!" exclaimed the Major. "Don't know about the Nile! My, my! Pity! Simple story. The Nile is the mother of all Egypt. The father's identity remains vague. Without the Nile Egypt would *n'existe plus*—exist no longer—pardon French. Periodic overflowing fertilizes land. Leaves deposit of silt behind. Careless! In old days it was a sacred river. Now, no less sacred, but yearly sacrifice of beautiful young girl to Nile God abolished. Bad taste. Waste of good material. Blue Nile meets White at Khartoum. White, greenish gray. Blue, clear blue. Why not? Blue Nile rises in Abyssinia Highlands. Rains there, snow melts. Large pieces Abyssinia dissolve. Wash down into Egypt. Silt. Some

UP THE NILE

day Abyssinia *n'existe plus*—French again, dash it all—it'll be lying on top of Egypt. A pretty thing. White Nile trickles down from Lake Victoria. Big dam at Assuan—big—," and stretching his arms wide apart he sawed them up and down. "Gates are opened. Water gushes out—zip, zip. Rise of Nile has been recorded since 3600 B.C. Long time. Sometimes not enough water—famine. Unpleasant. Sometimes too much,—whole bally country washed away. Banks cave in. Find your corn field twenty miles down river on top of someone's bean field. You locate corn field and move down. It still belongs to you. Build new mud house. Old one has dissolved. Hard luck on man growing beans—compromise some way—"

"They might collaborate in growing succotash," I suggested. It was old, but the best I could muster at the moment.

"Quite," said the Major, eying me suspiciously. "Well! That's the Nile—take it or leave it."

"Let's leave it for the present, and go in to dinner," I suggested.

"Why is it," I asked the Major as we played

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with the curry, "in Egypt one always feels oppressed by the crushing weight of centuries; by a sense of immeasurable antiquity; by the smell of death in the air? Why is it?"

"I'm sure I don't know," he answered, abstractedly as though he'd been asleep with his eyes open. "But, as the fellow says, thanks very much for asking me."

During the night we whizzed through an archeological paradise; Biba, Beni Hassan, Tell el-Amarna, Asyut, Abydos, all redolent with age, dripping with romance. Fortunately, I awoke early enough to see the rosy light of an Egyptian dawn tint the weather-worn escarpment of the Theban Hills near Luxor. Then, on the bright green strip of cultivated land lying between them and the river, we passed the two lonely figures of the Colossi. In Pagan days, at this hour, the one known as "The Vocal Memnon" was wont to trill out its mysterious musical notes. It was the hour of dawn now, yet Memnon remained silent. For two thousand years, not a yodel had passed its grit-stone lips; its flinty epiglottis had remained mute; its schisty larynx quiescent. Septimius

UP THE NILE

Severus, the Roman, had done a repair job on it just after Christ's time that had effectively deranged its musical organs.

The Major stirred and opened an eye. "We're passing the Colossi," I said excitedly.

"Good eggs," he murmured. "Must have suffered. Memnon's legs covered with inscriptions. Roman tourists eighteen centuries ago. Bad business. Only one Egyptian vandal. He scratched a maxim on the instep with cold chisel. Must have tickled. Bilbilla, Hadrian's court poetess, chipped sentiments on shin-bone. Asklepiodotus hacked six elegiac verses on knee-cap. Sight of Roman approaching with chisel and mallet must have brought goose-pimples out on poor fellow. Call me at nine. More 'shut-eye.'"

After breakfast we shifted to the narrow gauge railroad running to Assuan. The window panes were tinted violet to save one's eyes from the white glare. The heat was becoming definite and unmistakable. Several times that day visions of Swiss snow fields danced through my head.

This was the first day I had experienced the entire cycle of Egyptian coloring, from dawn to sun-

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set. It was kaleidoscopic. At dawn the air was sharp. The river flowed silently under a seething, snowy counterpane of mist. Above its virginal green banks the hills rose, mysterious and purple in the face of the rising sun. Gradually their arid fastnesses, the narrow strip of green that fringed it and the thread of river itself, were suffused by pinkish tints ineffably delicate and soft. Over all, a deep inscrutable blue, rested the sky.

Mid-day. The white heat of an electric furnace. Bluffs and buttresses of rock cast bluish black shadows on satin-like sand drifts. The glare of the high sun paints hill and valley silver gray. It is the time of sleep for man and beast.

Evening. Warm lights, rich in color. Iridescent skies; shadows of bluish black. Effulgent prismatic beams and rays pearly shadows; ebony pools of darkness. Then, the ruddy after-glow with "the hills translucent against the purple earth shadow mounting in the East until all is absorbed by it." The high lateen sails of the Nile boats take on the color of old ivory. The full moon is distorted by the gently moving water into twisting bars of silver. The stillness of death settles over

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all. Sákiya and Shadúf are silent. Oxen, donkey, camel, water buffalo, fallahin are sunk in dreamless slumber.

The strips of emerald green that outlined the river bottom, contracted and expanded as the hills closed in or receded. Colors were vivid. The cotton and wheat of the delta gave place to sugarcane and Indian corn. The dóm palm, poppies and castor oil plant frolicked in the friendliest confusion.

At Erment, a few miles from Luxor, it is noted that formerly one might gaze on the remains of a "Birth House" built by Cleopatra, but alas! its few remaining stone blocks were requisitioned for the construction of a sugar factory, and of a flight of steps from the bazaar to the river. What a frustration!

We passed numerous rock tombs that must have been havens of coolness after a lifetime spent in the glaring heat of the valley. I aroused the Major from a trancelike coma. To me it was all tremendously interesting.

"Listen to what an authority says of the rock tomb of Pahari," I urged him, "we're passing it

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now." From the guide-book I read: " 'Pahari was Governor of the Nôme'—district you know"—

"Quite," murmured the Major.

" 'And the office seems to have been hereditary in his family. He was also tutor to a royal prince,' " I read on.

"Jolly soft."

" 'On the west wall of his tomb are drawings depicting the ploughing, sowing and reaping of wheat and dura; the treading of the corn; winnowing, measuring and storing of the grain.' "

"Hum!"

" 'The inscriptions give little songs sung by the labourers, such as:

Hie along oxen,
Tread the grain faster!

The straw for yourselves,
The grain for your master.

or:

A fine day,
One is cool.
The oxen are drawing,
The heaven is doing according to our hearts.
Let us work for the noble.'

UP THE NILE

"You see, man and beast was contented with his slavish lot in those days." I continued to read: "There are also scenes of fishing, fowling and funeral rites. On the East wall are Pahari and his wife at a banquet, with their relatives opposite. Woman harpists, lute and flute players are to be seen in the lower row.' There they are, McFee, and there they'll remain forever—locked in a strange immortality— Though lutist, flutist and harpist have been dust for three thousand years—though their dead strings vibrate no more to stir the melodious echo—there they are. I tell you, McFee, it's heartbreaking—" Receiving no response, I looked up. The Major had once more sunk into a trancelike coma.

"Well, anyway," I addressed his lymphatic body, "so much for the rock tombs."

At sunset we pulled into Assuan, and continuing right on through the town ran to the side of the river steamer lying beside the wharf at Shellal.

The Major roused himself. "Last time I was here," he remarked, regarding the incarnadined strip of Western sky with a dreamy eye, "curious thing happened."

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“You fell in love?”

“Yes— No, I mean. Two boys fighting on dock. Big man with stick approaches. Following dialogue:

“Big Man—‘Why do you boys fight?’

“First Boy—‘I stole some money, and this thief was trying to take it away from me. Who are you?’

“Big Man—‘Allah! Me? I am a policeman.’

“Dashed curious.”

The Bisharin Camp, Island of Elephantine, Nilometer, Philæ, Temple of Isis, fifty-seven Tombs, the Dam, lay shrouded in the glamorous light of eventide; and so shrouded they must remain. The height, breadth, length and coast of the dam I fear will ever be a mystery to me. The number of upper sluices and lower sluices, the quantity of ashlar granite, the width of the causeway along its top, lie permanently buried in a purple haze.

The flat-bottomed steamer drifted out on the glassy waters of the Upper River; the paddle wheel at its stern began to churn with violence,

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and our journey through Nubia to Wadi Halfa became a fact. The moon was full. It was a night of seductive loveliness.

At dinner a stranger was placed at our table, but his strangeness was dispelled in a matter of minutes. His name was Berg something or other. He was a Norwegian; an ornithologist, bound for the high reaches of the Nile to photograph bird life. He told us of his boyhood, young manhood and middle life; of Egypt and rock tombs and dams; barrages and astronomy. As dessert arrived, he very properly turned to more waggish subjects.

"Why is it," he asked suddenly, "that one never meets a pretty girl when traveling?"

"Why is it?" I agreed, "I never thought of it before."

"May be this way," mused the Major. "Must be a reason. Sheba was Queen of Abyssinia in Old Testament days. Fine woman. This river great trade route. Gold, ivory, aromatic gums, ebony, floated down it. Queen of Sheba first great female traveler. Went on visit to Solomon, King of Hebrews. Long way. Fatiguing journey.

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Lots of sightseeing. Solomon too hospitable. Net result. Birth of son by Sheba. Menelik. Entirely unpremeditated. Sheba very much annoyed. Founded line of Abyssinian Kings. Still on throne. From then on pretty girls gave up traveling."

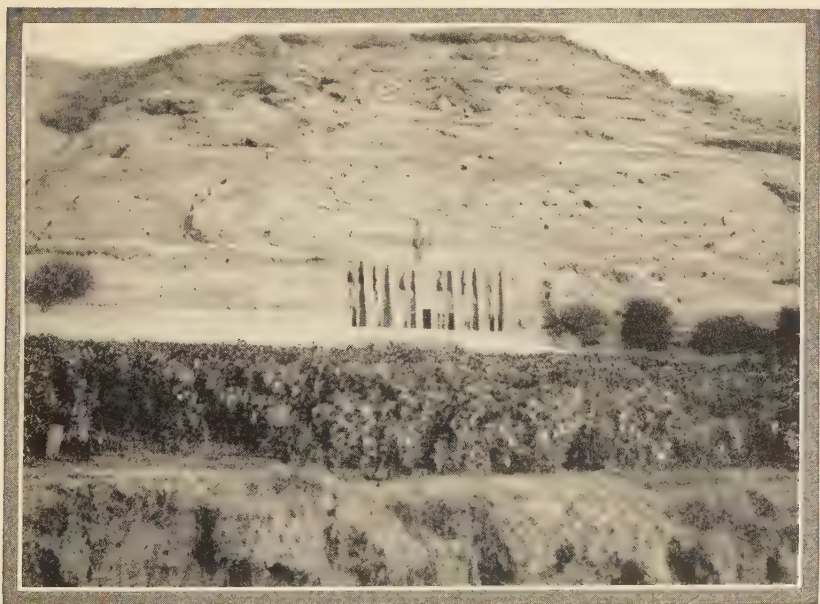
In the language of the diplomat, this closed the incident.

It's unfortunate that in a tale of carmine adventure—as this one surely is—one may not linger over a tranquil river journey. We should be permitted to pause at Kalabasha to view the sculptured reliefs of giraffes, ostriches, and other strange animals, on the Temple walls; again, at the Temple of Rameses, where a list of his children has been recorded in stone—one hundred and seventy-eight toddling little mischiefs, dust these thousands of years. But it may not be.

The dam at Assuan has transformed the river into a vast lagoon nearly two hundred miles in length. Half-submerged palm trees and villages, that have become mere nesting places for migrating fish, lend an air of melancholy to the scene. It



Down it floated—gold, ivory, aromatic gums and ebony in the day when Sheba was Queen of Abyssinia.



In spite of its electric lights Abu Simbel was a spooky place—full of the smell of rotten shrouds.

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is a world bereft of life. The water washes the very edge of the hills.

At the remains of Ibrum, the most remote Southern outpost of Roman times, I stood on the walls just as the sun was doing its final nose dive, and looked out over a scene of desolation difficult to describe. Far below, at my feet, lay the ancient cemetery; its graves yawning, plundered centuries ago. The silence was oppressive—almost ponderable, and seemed at last to reverberate as with the beating of distant drums.

One may wonder at my failure to describe the Sákiya and Shadúf. No descriptive narrative of a Nile journey since the days of Herodotus has failed to include them. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* also includes them. Together with the donkey, the cry of “bakshish,” the water buffalo and fallahin, they are the very essence of Egypt. Yet you’ll never hear about them from me, alas—my *Encyclopaedia Britannica* isn’t handy at the moment.

We tied up to the bank and saw the rock temple of Abu Simbel before dawn. In spite of its electric lights, it was a spooky place withal, full of the

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smell of rotten shrouds. As we emerged, the East was becoming iridescent with rosy tints; and suddenly the air was filled with such a doleful groaning and shrieking that one paused in his tracks and searched his neighbor's face with a startled eye. But it was only the Sákíyas starting their daily grind.

The channel of the river grew difficult to follow. From time to time we ran on surreptitious sand bars; to be duly pushed off by the crew, armed with long poles.

Then Wadi Halfa in the Sudan. Straight from the boat to the train. Modern trains with every convenience, such as one would expect the English to operate.

Merrily we roll over the super-heated Nubian Desert, said to be the hottest place this side of Sheol. One can find no subject for jest in the railroad built by Kitchener of Khartoum for the purpose of quelling the Mad Mullah. We become enveloped in an outer epidermis of dust and cinders; we pass Atbara, crossing the muddy river; we rumble over the Blue Nile and on into Khartoum.

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“Well, toodle-O,” said the Major, “I’m off.”

“Good-bye, McFee” I replied. “See you when we get back.”

It was 4 P.M., Saturday, January twenty-sixth.

CHAPTER IV

Khartoum. Introducing the subject of Abyssinian poachers.

THE sun was setting like a vast red ball. Palm trees, their fronds motionless in the still air, split its rubicund face into alternate strips of ebony and deep plutonic red. Behind us rose a weird mingling of grunts, squeals, sneezes and deep, moist sighs. It was Khartoum's open air zoo. We sat in the garden of the Game Warden. Not long since, the strident cry of the Muezzin echoing from minaret to minaret had called the faithful to prayer. Following a time-worn custom the English too were gathering, but not for prayer. In cool dingle and bosky nook they were about to go through the ritual of "tea" and "sundowners." No brass-lunged priest of the tea-caddy or siphon bottle shrieked out his vulgar reminder of this time-worn ceremony. None was necessary. As one man they came.

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Captain Coldthirst was the Game Warden. The entire Sudan was his principality—a million square miles, more or less; his subjects, too numerous to number, were hoofed, clawed and horned. In vast solitudes they ruminated, gambled and hiccuped, undisturbed except for the sporadic and carefully licensed hunter. It was easy to see that the welfare of his four-legged wards was as vital to the Captain as though they could cast a ballot with each hoof. “Who strikes them down, strikes me,” would have been a fine motto for his crest, with possibly an aard-vark rampant on a field of halfa grass. In a state of languid indolence we reclined on well-stretched canvas steamer-chairs. Without moving, Coldthirst rolled his head on the back of his chair until he could fix both Lake and me with a dreamy eye.

“When you get up on the Dinder River,” he remarked listlessly, “do me a favor.”

We politely agreed.

“If you see any sick Ariel gazelle put them out of their misery. And oh! yes,” he added as an afterthought—“if you run into any Abyssinian

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poachers up there killing my game give them the same medicine."

"You mean?" I queried.

"Shoot 'em dead."

"But how will we know they're Abyssinian poachers?" I enquired without enthusiasm.

"You can't mistake 'em," he answered, letting his head roll back to its normal position. "They'll be so heavily armed."

"Gosh!" said Lake.

Personally, I remained silent. I didn't tell the Captain that the approach of a heavily armed person always short-circuited my motor nerves. I couldn't, my uvula was not functioning. Nor did I mention a traditional family inhibition, touching on Abyssinian poachers, that ran way back to the days of our original ancestral amoeba. It was impossible. I seemed to be affected with a slight touch of duck-pip.

It was Lake who broke the silence, and glad I was that he did, for the old maxim about "silence giving consent" began to run through my mind. "Are poachers covered by our game licenses?" he enquired.

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"Not in so many words," replied the Captain, "but they're a frightful nuisance. They do in thousands of head of game. I can't get up on the Dinder often, so I always ask anyone kindly disposed towards animals to co-operate."

"Good," said Lake.

"Splendid," said I, and though considerable vagueness still existed in my mind as to just what kind of assassination was coming off, the matter seemed settled.

From that moment our whole trip seemed to hinge on Abyssinian poachers. By day, I saw them crouching in every shadow with blood-shot eyes and drooling mouths; by night, I dreamed of them. I breathed them; drank them; and, in fancy, ate them fricasseed, en casserole and poached in their natural state.

The sun sank. A lurid after-glow ensanguined the West. Another pair of prospective nimrods joined us, and the talk at once turned to firearms. Was a 350 Magnum rifle more practical than a double-barrelled Cordite? Then someone, in phrases fecund with lethal terms, described a new bullet he had just designed. It was a blood-

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thirsty effort, but its effect on me was like the whiff of a powerful anaesthetic.

The nocturnal denizens of the zoo began to challenge the night with muffled growls and shrill twitterings, and once there was a roar that filled the still air with rippling reverberations.

My mind began to wander. It had been a chaotic day, full of tiresome details.

After saying good-bye to McFee I had drifted up and down the station platform wondering what to do next. A fantastic mixture of races surged to and fro, but Lake was nowhere to be seen. I searched until I dripped moisture like a watering pot. He wasn't there; nor was there a single friendly, familiar face in all that milling throng. "It's been a nice trip anyway," I consoled myself, "and everyone should see Egypt."

The sky was cloudless and faintly opaque from a burden of dust; the light was white; the heat oppressive. I was just about to yield to the persuasive warbling of a Nubian in a white night-shirt, sitting on the box of a sort of drosky, drawn by two small ponies, when suddenly far down the

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wide road rose a cloud of dust. With my foot on the step of the drosky I paused. "Maybe it's a hebûb," I thought. Someone had told me of the desert sand-storms that frequently enveloped Khartoum in grit, gloom and glumness. Anyway, I hoped it was a hebûb. One should see everything.

This particular hebûb approached with hurricane speed. Though no quadrupeds were visible, the muffled pounding of horses' hooves seemed to pulse from its very core. In front of me it came to an abrupt halt, and out from its tenebral murkiness stepped Lake.

"Well! Well!" he said in distressing English. "If here you aren't,—sure enough. I was busy checking over supplies, and lost track of time."

"Yes. Here I am," I replied. "I've just been skiing up in Switzerland and—"

"We're all set, nearly," Lake breezed on, without giving me a chance. "We've accumulated an entourage."

"My God, what's that?" I muttered. From his pronunciation it was difficult to know.

"Well, you can't go cameleering without ser-

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vants," he explained. "Somebody's got to do the work. There's Abdu Halel, cook, wages four pounds per month; Ali Juma, personal servant, wages ditto; and a half-portion scullery lad, Fadl Saeed, pounds two per month. We still need a professional gent to peel the skins off the gazelles—a 'skinner.' Then our entourage'll be complete."

"Not quite," I suggested. "We still need a couple of darkies to go out and shoot the animals for this gazelle peeler, so that all we'll have to do is sit in a grass wiki-up and play double dummy.—"

"Leave it to me," said Lake. "I've been studying this trip for a week. We leave for Sennar the 30th, by rail. The camels meet us there. Our supplies are all packed in camel boxes. By the way, we'd better stop at Capatos now and give 'em a final checking—it's right on our way." My, but that boy was energetic.

By this time the dust cloud had settled to reveal a perfectly good drosky with Nubian, night-shirt, ponies and all. The face of the Nubian was rather a ghastly sight.



There's no subject for jest in the Nubian Desert—the hottest place this side of Sheol.



“There's Gordon's statue,” said Lake.

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"Leap into this second-hand coffin," Lake invited. "We're staying at the Grand Hotel."

"Over there on our right's the Civil Hospital," he ran on. Poor fellow, not being gifted with second sight, he could hardly be expected to realize that in a few weeks he would lie in one of its private rooms and get a first-hand glimpse of its ghastly inner workings.

"Straight down this road," he bubbled, "are the Public Gardens; Gordon's Statue—he's mounted on a camel—and the Governor's Palace. The town was laid out by Kitchener in 1898. Its plan is like a series of Union Jacks. Streets are very wide and radiate from small squares. That's so they can be raked by machine-gun fire. Boy, from now on, this burg is going to be orderly. Population about thirty thousand. Well scrambled. Gyps, Greeks, Syrians, Nubians, Dongolese, Baggare fighters, Jaalin pacifists, Dinkas, Shilluks and various brands of Arabs—try that on your Aunt Emma's spinnet some time. Across the river is Khartoum North, twenty thousand people, and over on the Nile in Omdurman there are seventy thousand people playing about. That's the Paris

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of the Sahara, from the native point of view—"the pulse of the Sudan"—I read that in a book. All the principal tribes and families of this region have agents at Omdurman to keep 'em posted."

We pulled up in front of a white building, bulging out over the sidewalk in the form of an arcade. "Capato's," said Lake.

Here, in a sort of packing room, we found two long rows of neatly packed rectangular boxes, with lids securely fastened by padlocks. On each cover was a list of its contents which served, after a few days in the field, to give a rough idea of where not to look for the particular article desired. But such matters were left entirely to the entourage. Later, whenever a fracas arose in the culinary department, we knew at once it was only Abdu looking for something. His method was simply to call Ali brutal names in Arabic. Ali in turn would give Fadl an unpleasant two minutes with the branch of a mimosa tree, and Abdu would then find what he was after.

"Briefly," said Lake, "the boxes contain the following items and dittos sufficient for fifty days: tea, coffee, sugar, saddle soap—"

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"That's enough!" I interrupted him. "The only thing I'm interested in is a mincing machine."

"I thought you wanted to keep this party simple," he mocked.

"Boy," I told him, "you're going to thank me for this mincer idea. African meat is leather, full of wiry sinews. It's got to be masticated two or three times before it can be swallowed, and even then you're apt to get hung up on a piece of bush-buck or something. Did you ever try to swallow a set of violin strings? A preliminary gnashing with a mincer may save your life—and another thing, I want to see one box full of every brand of sauce they have in the place. For, with wild meat, sauces cover up an awful lot."

Of course, Abdu the cook would have a plentiful supply of curry powders, and other lotions and unguents for putting new life into a guinea fowl's breast, or restoring the lost manhood of a haunch of oribi.

"In selecting our camp furniture," said Lake, "simplicity was my watchword. I didn't go in for any Period stuff."

He was right. Exclamation points and question

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marks described it better. There were two collapsible camp beds with slender legs, looking like the illicit offspring of a chaise longue and undertaker's camp-stool. There were two canvas steamer-chairs, and a collapsible table—given to swooning on the ground unexpectedly. Lastly, there was a thing called a "basin, bath and stand"; a sort of tripod that in one position was a wash basin, and in another flattened out to form sort of a Lilliputian tub. After one mastered the proper dislocations and contortions, he bathed in it. Of course, we took mosquito nets. These household effects were to be placed on a ground sheet about ten by fourteen feet in area.

We were to use no tent. Indeed, we took none. There was no dew. Nor was there a cloud to be seen in the sky month on end, so ran our information. The soft translucent velvet of the tropical night was to be our only canopy; the scintillating brilliancy of the stars would serve as bed-lights. Reverting to earth again, three-ply Jaeger sleeping bags, enclosed in canvas covers, were to do duty at once as mattress and blanket.

Our clothing presented no problem whatever.

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Khaki-colored flannel shirts, shorts, puttees and hob-nailed boots, or any variation, sufficed. Good stout pajamas, tucked into high suede boots, called "mosquito boots," proved comfortable in the late afternoon after bathing. It was an efficient costume, for directly after dinner all one had to do was kick off his boots and roll into bed. Of course, a sun helmet was necessary.

"Well, I guess those details are almost behind us," said Lake at last,—“boring but needful,” he added, as we once more entered our carriage.

To the accompaniment of much violent whip-cracking we tore through dusty streets; then suddenly entered an umbrageous paradise; a broad macadam roadway stretching along the Blue Nile, lined with great trees that locked their branches overhead in a leafy canopy. At the base of its ramp of stone the water eddied silently.

"This is known as the Embankment," Lake volunteered.

The life of the river went on apace. A *sákiya* shattered the silence with banshee cries as wooden axle ground against dry wooden bearing; and in

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vain its dripping earthen jars attempted to slake the unquenchable thirst of countless crawling roots. Against the bank a trim launch or two mingled in strange confusion with the primitive craft of half-naked Nile "river men." Slung at rakish angles lateen sails were snugly furled. Arched shelters thatched with grass on their miniature poop-decks shielded the crew from the shafts of the sun. Withal, they discharged but dull cargoes. Frankincense, myrrh, elephant ivory and ebony were not for them; rough stone, sand, or sun-dried bricks compounded of clay and cow dung, was the measure of their romance. Not far distant several donkey boys performed a lustral ceremony; first on their donkeys; then on themselves. The donkeys were unresponsive. The driver of a phaeton unhitched his drooping steeds and collaborated with them in the refreshment of a frankly nude immersion.

Across the river, on the sand spit that formed the snout of Tuti Island, flocks of goats and sheep were being driven to water with Biblical authenticity. Complaisantly they stood and let the little wavelets lap their backs. Acting in accordance

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with the tenets of Mohammed the shepherds performed their evening ablutions. It was indeed the "river of life." The light was diffused and soft.

With appropriate abruptness, we pulled up in front of a long, rambling building sunk in a miniature oasis, and entirely wrapt round by a wide verandah.

"Grand Hotel," said Lake, motioning to a synod of donkey boys, carriage drivers and others whose vocations were more of a mystery.

Immediately, two men and a boy sprang to his side. The first, a muscular, soldierly man, with a moustache and bulging turban, was presented as Abdu. He saluted smartly, heels together. The second, in appearance at once sable-hued and anaemic, made a noble attempt at a military salute, but only succeeded in sticking a finger into his eye. This was Ali.

Lake regarded him dubiously: "Look here, Ali," he said, "I'm not quite sure of you. You've got an eye like a codfish, and seem about as full of vitality as a wet tennis ball. This is going to be a hard trip. Are you strong?"

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For a moment Ali's dead eyes revolved aimlessly. "Are you strong?" he repeated as though trying to grasp the inner meaning of this simple question. Then with painful effort delivered himself. "O, yes,—strong. I can ride a camel."

"Inasmuch as you walk, that gift won't get you far," snapped Lake.

Then, the urchin Fadl stood forth and grinned. A slight trickle of some oriental saccharine mixture oozed in an appetizing way from one corner of his mouth.

"Our entourage," Lake confided proudly. Then turning to Fadl remarked sternly: "Wipe off your chin. The boy'll tend to your baggage," he continued. "From now on don't lift a finger—for the sake of our prestige. Abdu speaks a little English. Ali claims he does. Fadl is deaf and dumb as far as we're concerned. Now, we'll go over to the Game Warden for a 'sundowner'."

Someone was shaking me. It was very annoying. Evidently he thought I'd been asleep. Silly ass. "Snap out of it," a voice said, but from what seemed a considerable distance.

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"You're wrong," I shouted—I must make the cuckoo hear me: "I'm not asleep. I'm merely thinking."

"Well, don't think so loud with your nose," Lake's voice commanded—nearer now.

I opened my eyes. The sky was full of soft colors against which the tousled heads of the palms stood out with funereal somberness. A night bird uttered a raucous cry. Voices were intoning monotonously like the babbling of a limpid brook: "It's the shocking power that counts"—"With a Magnum, as you hit 'em—so they drop"—Of course! Khartoum — Game Wardens — Abyssinians.

I shoved forward to the edge of my chair as though nothing had happened. "There's one thing I forgot to ask about, Lake," I said, "were you able to engage a white hunter to sort of look after us on this ramble?"

Coldthirst answered for him. "Sorry," he said, "but we don't allow professionals in the Sudan. Our policy is to protect the game. For the real sportsman this country's a paradise."

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"Then, we've forgotten to take the most important of all," I whispered to Lake.

"No?"—his tone was full of discouragement.

"Yes," I insisted. "A pair of nice comfortable non-refillable coffins."

CHAPTER V

Makwar. Servant problem entirely eliminated. We connect with our camels, sometimes called "Ships of the Desert," by people who don't care what they say.

THAT night sleep was impossible. To begin with, it was as hot as the forecourt of Gehenna. To end with, fourteen million microscopic insects flew through the mosquito netting and appeased their hunger on one's carcass. They seemed to regard a thrashing human form as a succulent table d'hôte.

"You look jaded," I suggested to Lake at breakfast.

"Who wouldn't if he'd been used for a pin cushion all night," he answered dully.

We proceeded to the Game Warden's to make final arrangements. Coldthirst was the color of a débutante's lingerie—if any.

"Gad! What a night!" he began at once.

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"Dined some people at the Sudan Club—not in-expensively. Then played the perfect host and lost fourteen pounds to them in a poker game. To cap the climax, we had to be inflicted with those devilish sand fleas last night. Didn't sleep a wink. We don't have 'em often, but when we do there's only one satisfaction—everybody from the Governor down suffers alike. The whole town looks haggard next day."

"Well now they're behind us," said Lake, "let's get busy and pick out our artillery."

Personally, I selected a .275 and double-barreled Cordite rifle, and just to show I wasn't afraid included a .22. The English call them "rook rifles," probably because they cost about twice as much as they would in any American hardware store.

Lake's fancy ran to a .275 fitted with a telescopic sight. This was a great instrument. You looked at the animal through the telescope, and lined up a couple of cross hairs on its withers. It only had two drawbacks. At a couple of hundred yards it made a gazelle look like a dinosaur just about to slap you down. The first time I tried to shoot an oribi with it I dropped the gun and ran.

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I thought I'd flushed a mastodon that had given up meat for Lent, and was mad about it.

Again, superfluous hair had an annoying way of accumulating on the lens. It turned out that both our camels and donkeys were troubled with falling hair; and before many days had passed the telescopic sight had accumulated so many cross hairs you couldn't tell one from another. It was like looking at the game through a hair-net.

Of course, for running animals it wasn't so good. It was hard to keep them in focus. The field of vision in such cases contracted, expanded and revolved so rapidly one was apt to be overcome by a violent illness similar to "mal de mer." Then he had to sit in the shade and recuperate.

Finally we unhinged it and employed it in trying to spy out Abyssinian poachers.

Lake also purchased a 350 Magnum, and a 12 gauge shot gun.

We united in the joint and several ownership of a very tricky fish pole and the necessary piscatorial appurtenances—whatever they are.

"I advise you to take a couple of donkeys for yourselves," Coldthirst cautioned. "Camel riding

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sounds romantic, but you'll find the romance only skin deep. Besides, if you see something you care to shoot it takes about five minutes to get off a camel. He's got to lie down first, and he's very noisy about it. You'll want a couple of English saddles for the donkeys, and by all means take two *fantassas*—"

"Dancing girls?" enquired Lake.

"More important," Coldthirst continued. "Ten gallon galvanized iron water tanks with padlocked vents. See that they're always locked, and hang the keys around your neck. The boys will carry their water in *girbas*—skin containers. Trouble with them is, if a camel leans against a thorn tree they get punctured and good-bye water." *Fantassas* and *girbas* were added.

"Now for the game licenses. An 'A' license is fifty pounds. That covers about forty different species, from addax to zebra—but there is a small supplemental charge. For instance, you are allowed twelve waterbuck all told—two on the license and the balance at one pound each. The whole schedule is worked out that way. Two buffalo are allowed, one on the license, with a two

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pound charge for the remainder. You pay the fifty pounds now, and when you return we collect the additional fees. Here is a 'Record of Game Killed' to use in the field," and he handed us something looking like a sheet out of a loose-leaf ledger.

"Suppose we take off a trial balance and it doesn't come out," said Lake, "what do we do—send for a certified public accountant?"

"I'm in favor of an adding machine," I suggested.

"At least let's take an abacus so we won't have to count on our fingers," Lake rattled on.

"You may laugh," said Coldthirst on the defensive, "but you can shoot our whole license out for one hundred and sixteen pounds, while in British East it costs about one hundred and eighty pounds."

"Well, all I can say is that those animals certainly have a price on their heads," concluded Lake.

"Now as to ammunition," Coldthirst proceeded, "I merely want to point out that you are each limited by regulation to four hundred rounds of ball cartridges; one thousand rounds of twenty-two's

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and one thousand rounds of shot gun cartridges. This is a wild country, and we are taking no chances of its getting into the hands of the natives. Moreover, if a person can't shoot out a license with four hundred rounds he's wasting his time. You must make each shot count."

"Looks as though all we'd be doing up there is counting," complained Lake.

"'Arms and ammunition may not be introduced in contravention of the provisions of this ordinance or of any convention regulating'—need I read further?" said the Captain.

"I'm convinced," said Lake.

The rest of the day we spent adding sundries to our equipment. Every time we passed Capato's or Vanian's one of us would strike his forehead and murmur something like: "pepper!" or "celery salt!" Then we'd go in and buy pepper or celery salt. It reached a point finally where we walked up back alleys to avoid passing either one of these places. At noon it was 92° in the shade.

"It would be a fine thing if we could run over to Omdurman," said Lake after lunch. "Listen to this: 'Omdurman is the central halting place

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for that mysterious two-fold stream of pilgrims struggling Eastward to Mecca, and Westward on their homeward route after the performance of the pilgrimage. Some of these wayfarers take several years to walk their way across Africa and settle temporarily in Omdurman until they have recovered from their hardships and acquired means to continue their journey.' I'd like to have a look at some of those pilgrims."

"Well, we can't," I told him. "We've got to spend the rest of the day remembering things we've forgotten."

That night we hired Mohammed Elhardi as skinner, and our entourage was complete. According to his statements, he held *cum laude* degrees from all the Chief Skinning Schools in Africa. "Anything from a human being to a humming bird," was his guarantee.

"We're lucky to get a good neat worker like Elhardi," Lake remarked in congratulatory tones. "I'm aiming to paper the walls of all my relatives' living-rooms with heads and skins."

The entourage spent a busy evening packing our

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effects. We played bottle pool. "I never knew what real traveling was before," Lake confided.

At six A.M. the next morning I looked from my window. A four-wheeled cart had been backed up to the front door of the hotel. In the shafts a discouraged looking donkey, about the size of a goat, propped his four legs wide apart to save himself from collapsing of his own weight. "Plum gum droppings" percolated from his half closed eyes. He was a picture of woefulness. Against him, in a condition bordering on complete debility, leaned Ali. Though their eyes were half open they both slept. I began to indulge in some misgivings about that boy myself. In some mysterious manner, however, they managed between them to trundle our mountainous pile of baggage to the railroad station.

Coldthirst came down to see us off. "Seems like we had an awful lot of baggage," I suggested.

"Don't worry. Ten camels, good for three hundred fifty pounds each, are waiting for you at Makwar. Wick, the District Commissioner, a nice chap, will also meet you and start you off for Singa, capital of Fung Province. At Singa, Pet-

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tingill will supply you *shikaris*. From there your *hamla*—caravan, you know—will ferry you over the Blue Nile and cut across to Abu Hashim on the Dinder River. After Singa, you're on your own. There's only one other party in the whole region—a solitary woman with five camels. If you run across her, see how she is getting on, and don't forget that anybody wandering about in the Khor Galegu region is a poacher. Our natives are not allowed so near the border. Pot 'em. At Romla on the Dinder, just this side of the border, there's an alleged fort, in case you need assistance. We keep a squad of men there at certain seasons.—But come to think of it I doubt if they'll be there for a couple of months yet.”

“In that case I think we'll refrain from the need of assistance,” I murmured.

The train slowly got under way.

“Well, cheerio,” Coldthirst called out after us. “You'll have a bully time. Wish I was off with you.—And—oh! yes—have Wick give you a dissertation on camels tonight.”

Under a cloudless sky we jolted all day over a flat plain of sunbaked earth, without tree, hum-

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mock or even an earthy wart to negative its dull monotony. On all sides of us it faded away to blend with the horizon. The day passed without incident. At a place called Hassaheissa we ran into a switch, padlocked against us—evidently they wanted us to be sure to stop. At the moment Ali was about to function with some slight refreshment. A hundred pound bed-roll jumped from the rack and zoomed down on his head.

“He’s a dead man,” exclaimed Lake.

“Don’t worry about his conch,” I predicted.

We fished him to the surface. He was rubbing his foot: “I think I’ve hurt my knee,” he complained.

The heat was disruptive, but did not hinder the entourage from serving a five course luncheon, followed in due season by a heavy tea. For the next two months their sole aim in life seemed to consist in seeing how much food they could stuff down us. They regarded the safari as a gastronomic orgy.

There was the usual devastating sunset. It grew dark. We came to a halt in a patch of gloom. Someone said, “Sennar.” Then at the door of our compartment appeared a tall thin individual with

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a hawk-like face. From neck to ankle hung a loose robe of mohair. "The Sheik," said Abdu, who already had been promoted to the post of interpreter. "He says your camels wait at Makwar, a few miles from here." We shook hands. His palms were moist and clammy. A faint aromatic odor — like cinnamon — drifted from his person. "Salaam," he said in serene accents. That was the beginning and end of the conversation. He did not conform to the conception of a Sheik planted in my mind by a cursory study of Robert Hichens. But we were not hunting Sheiks.

Once more the train was in motion. A brief interval and the brakes ground, this time with an air of finality. "Makwar," someone said. It was the end of our journey.

In the gloom, relieved by a single oil lantern, we were greeted by a slight young man with a boyish face. "I'm Wick, the Commissioner," he introduced himself. "Glad to see you."

Then behind us rose a series of sounds at once weird and bestial; bubbling regurgitations; throaty groans; burbles, bleats and gargles; roars of leonine ferocity; plaintive wails as of an infant pass-

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ing through a Gethsemane of colic. As our eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness we could distinguish, drawn up in a mathematical row behind us, with legs folded neatly beneath them, the supine bulk of a vast number of animals. Their small heads were attached to serpentine necks, yet sphinxlike they stared fixedly into the darkness. A sulphurous, fetid, noxious perfume drifted by on the soft evening breeze. It was not a monotonous perfume. It was continually shifting from bad to worse.

"God," gasped Lake. "What is it?"

"Your camels," answered Wick apologetically. "They've got the wind on us. But aside from that I've booked a couple of rooms for you at the hotel. The Sheik will see your baggage over. One of your boys can sleep with it on the verandah."

"I wish you'd dine with us," I urged. "We want to hear all about camels. I think it's time we were told things."

"With pleasure," Wick replied. "But as far as camels go, it would be far more entertaining for you to find out about them yourselves."

CHAPTER VI

*Again Makwar. "More and more about less and less." Rep-
tiles. Camels. Dam building. Homicides. Aeroplanes.
We set off on asses' backs.*

IT was early morning. Ali stood by my bedside with tea.

"Tea and tea and tea!" I muttered, and rolled a half-opened eye over my strange surroundings. On the wall opposite, half a dozen small lizards clung as motionless as though painted there. "So far, so good," I thought. In the middle of the floor sat a fair sized toad, with bulging aldermanic stomach and protruding eyes. With a stare at once enigmatic and unwinking he regarded me. It was an appraising, disconcerting stare. On top of the officer's tin trunk I had purchased second hand at Khartoum, reposed a distinctly large hairy spider. A conservative estimate would have placed

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his diameter at about three inches. His color was a vivid mottling of orange and black—"Quite Princetonian," I reflected. His hair was long and dank: "No. He looks more like a yak," I corrected myself. As still as death he squatted, watching.

The intensive zoological scrutiny became unendurable. As motionless as though chiseled from marble they all sat waiting—waiting. It was more than I could stand: "Clear out this Goddam menagerie," I yelled at Ali, and pulled the bedding around my neck.

"Goddam menagerie," he repeated with dead uncomprehending eyes.

"Chase 'em—that and that and **THAT**," I ordered, pointing excitedly.

"Chase 'em," echoed Ali, a light beginning to break. "Shoo—shoo!" he admonished the spider, approaching it with an experimental bare foot. There was a golden flash, almost impossible for the eye to follow, and it was gone. A look of blank amazement swept over Ali's face. It was incredible. Wetting a forefinger, he touched the spot just vacated by the orange and black arachnida.



*Bed rock, for millenniums hidden beneath the ooze of the river,
now lay exposed. The Makwar Dam and the Pyramids
were built on the same principles.*

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Sure enough, it was gone—beyond the shadow of a doubt. At once his face wreathed itself into an idiotic smile of triumph. “Shooy—shooy!” he started in on his next victim.

“About these camels,” said Lake during breakfast, “the first thing is to get their humps straightened out——”

“What do you mean—a little plastic surgery?” I asked.

“I’ve been doing a little research work on camels that you’re going to thank me for,” he went on with a pained expression. “Did you know that the Arabian camel was single-humped, while the Bactrian of Central Asia is double-humped? That both are called camels? That a dromedary is any fleet camel bred especially for riding——”

“I thought a dromedary was a kind of date,” I interrupted. “Pray continue, your conversation is most dull and instructive.”

“Did you know it was one of the earliest animals to be domesticated?— Of course not, you ignoramus.— That, according to the Scriptures, six thousand camels formed part of the wealth of the Patriarch Job. That Pharaoh gave Abraham

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camels for a present— Now don't say: 'Why didn't he make it Chesterfields?'— That Joseph was sold to a company of Ishmaelites traveling from Gilead to Egypt on camels laden with spices—much as their Arabian descendants do to-day. That the hump of a camel shrinks according to its condition, and during the rutting season the males become exceedingly savage uttering long bubbling cries and engaging in fierce combats," he stopped for breath.

"What's the attitude of the female?" I enquired.

"Bored resignation— But you would ask a question like that," he replied with disgust.

Fortunately, at that moment Abdu approached for instructions, so the story of the camel was temporarily deferred.

"With the gentlemen's permission," he started, "the *hamla*——"

"*Hamla*?" said Lake.

"Caravan—you wiseacre," I explained.

"—The *hamla* will move to the rest house just the other side of Ereidiba, and everything will be ready for the gentlemen when they arrive at sundown. The next day Singa. The gentlemen can

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follow on the donkeys about three o'clock. The donkey boy will guide them," and he went off to assemble our plunder.

Wick and the Sheik sauntered up. "Good morning," said Wick. "The Sheik is all ready to do business."

The business consisted in our passing over to him the top half of our bank rolls, as an advance payment for the camels.

"He's taking no chances," whispered Lake.

"Why should a Sheik take chances?" I answered. "Besides we've accumulated ten of his camels, five camel boys, two donkeys and a donkey boy."

"Every time we hesitate anywhere, the party expands," said Lake. "It's beginning to look like a parade."

Wick picked up his hat. "Until you get to Beida you'll be able to buy chickens and eggs, so you'd better take a sack of small coin along," he advised.

"You mean—chicken feed," said Lake.

"Whatever—" replied Wick, a little puzzled. I

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think he was beginning to suspect us of failing mentality.

In charge of Abdu, therefore, we loaded about thirty pounds of milliemes, piastres and shillings on a camel that Lake at once christened "Federal Reserve." "Let's get 'em under way before we remember anything else we ought to take," he said.

They seemed to be only waiting for the word.

"All right, boys," we yelled, "shove off!" and pointed up the Blue Nile.

As though each movement caused the most excruciating agony, the sad-eyed animals unfolded themselves and lurched to their feet, filling the air with groans and throaty gurglings.

And yet, as they crossed the railroad tracks and filed away over the flat sunbaked plain, distance lent enchantment and romance spread her wings over them. Gradually they dwindled; then vanished in the distance. It was like listening to a voice from the grave; a message from the dim past.

Our *hamla* was under way.

For the rest of the morning we were free to wander at will.



Cheops himself would have approved of this masonry.



Babies were strapped to backs that sinuously swayed under gritty loads.

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Makwar was a small flat town that had sprung into importance over night on account of the great dam that was in the course of construction. It contained a good hospital and a polo field, so it was beginning to rate as a metropolis. There was but one direction in which to wander—towards the river—the focal point of all local life: its very essence and life's blood.

In a few moments we stood on a pile of masonry jutting into the Blue Nile. From the opposite bank a similar flinty barrier protruded. Between the two, but a narrow gap remained. In a few weeks a solid rampart of ashlar granite would hold the life-giving waters in monumental fetters. The Makwar Dam would exist as an historic monument. A thread-like maze of irrigation ditches, like veins and arteries, would spread out over the vast plain of silt we had crossed the previous day. Soil that had lain sterile for centuries would feel the pulse of life. Fields of cotton and *dhurra* would fructify to the honor of England.

At the extreme end of our wall of masonry we paused and looked a hundred feet below, where the work of closing the gap still went on. Bed

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rock, for millenniums hidden beneath the ooze of the river, now lay exposed. Into this, dark-skinned masons were keying walls of hewn stone. Between them a mixture of broken rock and concrete was slowly filling up the void. A load of rubble was discharged into the abyss. At once, a long line of ant-like forms filed from a concrete mixer. They were women. Balanced on each head was a shallow pan filled with concrete. Back and forth in an unending stream they plodded. Babies were strapped to backs that sinuously swayed under gritty loads. The babies slept, or without concern regarded the scene with serene eyes. Over with a full pan—back with an empty! The sun shone with incandescent brilliancy. The heat was almost unbearable. Yet, down at the bottom of that humid pit, the ant-like forms filed to and fro. So the pyramids were built six thousand years ago. Yet, but a few yards away a vast intricate steam shovel performed the labor of scores of men.

“What does it all mean?” I murmured.

“It means that England’s going to grow cotton down here,” said Lake. “Let’s move.”

Wick had invited us to visit his court room.

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Streaming with perspiration, we ambled to the small building before which flew the flags of England and Egypt.

It was a small white-washed room. Court was in session. Wick, as District Commissioner, presided.

Without, a few *askaris* "rode herd" on the half dozen malefactors awaiting their fate. A mild mannered native was on the stand.

"What's he up for?" I enquired.

"Murder," answered Wick.

The prisoner spoke eloquently in Arabic, regarding Wick's mobile face intently for a clue as to the effect of his remarks.

"What's he saying?" I asked.

"That he was so drunk he didn't know what he was doing. He was not a free agent. Whiskey killed Abrim. He had nothing to do with it."

"And you told him?"

"That if there was a murder in every bottle of whiskey there would be a holocaust in Makwar."

Again the prisoner addressed the court, apparently employing a new argument.

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"Now what?" I nagged. It was tantalizing to miss it all.

"Literally," Wick translated, "he said he could see his justification did not impress me greatly, so he'd like to change his defense to 'the Unwritten Law'—I think you call it in America."

"Versatile devil. What happens to him?"

"He goes to Khartoum for sentence. Before he gets through the only evidence we'll have that there's been a murder, is the body."

In the sun the thermometer stood at 110°, but the air was so dry the heat was not unbearable. We sat in the shade of the verandah after lunch. Gradually one became aware of a droning hum. It seemed to drift from the cerulean void above us. It grew louder; became a definite fact.

"Unless the works in my belfry are full of grit," I suggested at length, "that's an aeroplane."

We stepped out into the small garden and craned our necks upward. Far above us was a small speck.

"He'll land on the Polo Field," said Lake. "Come on."



"We're nothing but snails," I agreed.

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Wick was already there, waiting in the center of a surging mob of natives. "It's the first plane that's ever flown over these parts," he said.

It spiraled gracefully, flattened out against the brown earth and came to rest. An R. F. C. Major scrambled out. Then six gory elephant tusks shot over the side, followed by the mechanic. We gathered about the Major. Around us pressed an hysterical, sweating mass of natives. A swaggering *askari*, armed with a short villainous whip, kept them from swarming over the fragile wings.

"They think it's a magic vulture, and the Major and mechanic are afreets," explained Wick.

"Not bad sport," the Major was saying, "left Khartoum day before yesterday. Came down on the Dinder River—way up some place. Some natives came over. 'Elephant,' we said—'Fil.' They started leading us around the woods. Suddenly there were elephants all over the place. Grayish brown. Big as houses. We fired everything we had. Got three. Well, I must be off. Want to make Khartoum tonight. Ball at the Sudan Club."

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The thirst of the magic vulture was assuaged with gasoline, the afreets climbed into its bosom, and spreading its wings away it sailed.

Rather thoughtfully, Lake and I mounted two half portion donkeys, and in the suffocating heat spread our own bedraggled feathers and set forth on our journey.

"Traveling on an ass's back looks sort of foolish after that," Lake remarked gloomily.

"We're nothing but snails," I agreed. "In three days that fellow has covered more ground than we will in three weeks."

II

WHY MEN DO DO IT.

CHAPTER VII

Drums and nightmares.

AT last we were off. Like a garment that had outlived its usefulness we discarded civilization. We had no regrets. A spirit of eager anticipation possessed us. We were Adventure-bound. We were elated—hilarious even. It was all quite different from our return seven weeks later. For a brief moment Makwar hovered on the sky-line, under its blanket of heat waves, and was gone.

Our donkeys were clearly not gaited for speed. In fact, they seemed to be suffering from a complication of disabilities prominent among which was sleeping sickness. We propelled them by means of stout shillalahs. It was a case of bang! thwack! bang! A dust raising shuffle for a hundred yards, then a gradual relapse into drugged slum-

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ber. Hour after hour the monotonous repetition continued until it stimulated one's mind to the invention of strange but spontaneous invective.

"This is certainly a case of beating your way," said Lake. His feet cleared the ground by about six inches; his English saddle covered his "forlorn hope" like a blanket; drowsy head and sorry rump alone were visible.

"We did well though," I answered between whams and thwacks, "to follow Coldthirst's advice and bring saddles. Speaking for myself, I could never have sat up here cross-legged like a bally Arab."

It was an ancient path we followed, running along the Blue Nile—a meandering, careless, little path that lured one on and on. Countless centuries of pattering donkey hooves had scarred it deep with winding furrows, while the dignified spongy tread of a thousand generations of camels had pulverized its surface to an imponderable powder. It was a highway of incessant comings and goings.

Armed with an odd assortment of nasty looking weapons, the flower and chivalry of the Sudan

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passed in review. Their arsenals ranged from spears, both plain and fancy, to elaborate snicker-snees that evidently figured in all sorts of carnage. One lone sportsman, with legs like pipe-stems, waved an instrument terminating in what looked like a mahogany head bristling with prongs, barbs and serrated edges.

"The question is," said Lake, "if he once got it in how would he ever get it out?"

"If he once got it in that question would cease to interest you," I told him.

A multiplicity of birds appeared and joined in a community warble to the setting sun. Doves were on every hand—incredible numbers—pecking and cooing throatily. In the spasmodic patches of cultivation a grayish bird, as big as a turkey, made the gravel fly—bustards. A bewildering variety of ducks, in mathematical formations, flew into the West, and as for geese—my word!

"There go some *wizz*," Lake would exclaim. Or, "Gad, look at the *wilili*."

A dozen brilliantly colored foragers, we did not even know the names of. It all began to look as wild and barbaric as the little booklet had prom-

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ised. A primitive life that had probably gone on just as we saw it for thousands of years.

We passed through several small villages of grass huts; a group of natives on diminutive donkeys rode with us for an hour. If dust means anything, we made quite an impressive cavalcade. The sun set in a cloudless sky; a weird twilight spread over the land. For three hours we had been traveling steadily. For the last hour I'd been eating dust. The Arabs had some system of making their donkeys respond that was a veiled mystery to me. So naturally I gravitated to the rear. I wanted to get off and sit down somewhere. I didn't care much where. My lungs felt as though they were being displaced by a formation of sedimentary rock. My hair had already begun to solidify. For just about one Polish mark I'd have swung my truncheon down on the cerebellum of that jackass, and abruptly ended the journey.

"Why do we do it, Lake?" I asked weakly on one occasion when I'd managed to catch up with him.

"Don't ask me that again," he answered, "or I'll tell you where you can go and find out."

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Even the donkeys were beginning to lag and stumble. But I consoled myself with the thought that it wasn't far to the ground, and thanked the Lord we weren't on camels' backs.

We passed through a grass village of a couple of thousand huts, weaving our way amongst them with the utmost informality. From several doorways hawk-like faces regarded us with sinister looks. Then, for the first time, I heard the throbbing of the great drums. An incessant barbaric syncopation filled the air. It bored into one's brain until the incessant dum-te, dum-te, te-dum-te, dum-te, dum-te, te-dum-te, held one in a bondage half hypnotic. Some kind of religious ceremony was afoot. I began to recall stories of the fanatical excesses committed by Mohammedans under the potent influence of their religion. Dum-te—dum-te—te-dum-te: slit throats—eyeless sockets—unspeakable mutilations, sang the drums. Shadowy forms, with burnous pulled over their heads, slipped by in the gloom.

My tired feeling fell away. We left the village behind us. A light appeared on the river bank twinkling encouragingly, and before we knew it

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we were slipping off our donkeys in front of the rest house. There was Abdu smiling broadly, and Ali's vacant grin. All was serene. Within, the ground sheet was down; a bath was ready; the table was set, two candle lamps making the cutlery sparkle and flicker; our beds were made up, our pajamas laid out, and the canvas steamer chairs yawned to receive our limp frames.

We bathed, then pulling our beds close to the table so we could recline between courses, fell to on a notably good dinner. There was thin soup; an entrée of eggs; a broiled chicken and *crêpe susette*—followed by Turkish coffee.

The fatigue of the day vanished. A feeling of warmth and contentment stole over us. A multitude of strange stars winked down on us; the mysterious, life-giving waters of the Blue Nile eddied silently, its calm surface reflecting their infinite luminous points. A warm glow spread over us; a beneficent feeling of peacefulness suffused us.

"This is why men do it," said Lake as he lay back on his cot idly swinging one foot. "It's the cat's meow."

But always the air was reverberating to the

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sound of the drums in the village behind us. Occasionally a piercing shriek would rise to a startling climax and fade away.

Abdu entered. "It will be necessary to start early if the gentlemen desire to reach Singa tomorrow," he said.

"All right, call us at seven," said Lake yawning.

"It will be necessary to have breakfast at not later than three-thirty, sir," Abdu replied.

"For cat's sake," exploded Lake, "do you think we're working on a night shift?"

"Whatever the gentlemen wish," replied Abdu.

"This is dead country for us," I interrupted. "Let's get on to the hunting." So it was settled. "But send Ali in here at three A.M. to shoo all the spiders and reptiles out," I concluded, and we sank back on our cots to enjoy the hard-earned dreamless slumber we had every right to expect.

What followed for the next five hours rises up at times to give me the horrors even yet. To the throbbing of the drums and diabolical shrieking that rose periodically from the village was added a new note. The camels. They were hobbled about a hundred yards away. Without a single inter-

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mission, they spent the night collaborating in a chorus of ghastly noises. They barked like seals; they cried like babies; they roared like lions; they gulped, burbled, cooed and regurgitated.

I thrashed for an hour. "So help me Hoboken, I never heard the like of it!" I remarked fervently.

"The camel is the Ship of the Desert, and has seven stomachs. He can go without a drink for five days," said Lake. "No wonder, when he sits up all night switching his water ballast from one stomach to another." Then the wind shifted, and blew from the camels to us. Anyone who's experienced the perfume of a camel knows the worst that can overtake a human nostril. Anyone who hasn't should never be told. I'd rather not dwell on the subject.

The two donkeys, intoxicated by the beauty of the night, frolicked round and round the rest house in an asinine bacchanal. Evidently sleep was a secondary consideration with them. They could sleep all day! Night was the time for amorous merry-making!

Nineteen dogs, of varying vocal powers, ap-

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peared on the scene for the purpose of chasing a weird little animal to and fro behind us. It uttered shrill angry cries, and expressed its displeasure by staccato chattering.

Dum-te-dum-te, te-dum-te, went the drums. The human shrieks grew more frequent and delirious.

At the end of another hour, Lake stealthily sat up in bed. With strange unnatural motions he rose. Fascinated, I watched him. He crept towards me. By my cot he paused, and gazed down at my shrinking form. The dim patch of light that filtered in from the open doorway revealed his eyes, fixed and staring. His arms hung limp at his sides. Spasmodically, his fingers twitched. As motionless as death, he stood and fixed me with an unwinking gaze. Then, with curious, stilted caution he returned to his cot, and falling on his knees began to fumble for his rifle. That it lay just at the head of his bed I was well aware. Before retiring each of us had loaded his favorite lethal weapon, and snuggled it close beside him, in the hope that its presence would at least give comfort if not entire oblivion. He muttered peevishly

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some unintelligent jargon. The rifle was in his hand. With a jerk I sat up in bed.

"For God's sake, Lake!" I yelled, "what's up?" With a start he wheeled around and blinked at me stupidly. "Pull yourself together!" I persisted. "Come out of it!"

He gasped once or twice, rubbed his eyes and yawned. "Where am I? Whaz matter?" He sat down on the edge of his bed. "Gad! I've been asleep. Sorry. I walk in my sleep. Once I jumped out a third-story window—but it didn't kill me—and another time at New Haven I started to choke my room-mate—he woke up in time though. It's a silly habit. Thanks for waking me. Well, good night," and he fell back on his bed.

Soon he was asleep again. Then I got up. It was my turn now, but I wasn't sleep walking. Like a predatory animal I crept to the side of his bed and felt for his rifle; clutching it to my bosom, I returned to my own bed-roll and there, swathed in three layers of Jaeger blankets, it remained for the brief remnant of that night.

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It couldn't have been more than half an hour later when Ali appeared with a candle, in accordance with instructions, and began his round-up of the lesser reptiles.

CHAPTER VIII

Singa-Town and Beer.

WE were not exactly beamish at breakfast. After a night such as we had passed one's impulses are apt to be murderous rather than jocular. The only light touch was supplied by two candles that flickered feebly on the table.

The Southern Cross rode in the sky over the tops of some mimosa trees; it winked and beckoned and obviously tried to lure us on to honey-scented equatorial regions; regions where the will of the strongest was both by-laws and constitution, subject to amendment only by assagai or rifle. Personally, I cared not one jot or tittle—not even the most microscopic of tittles.

At four-thirty A.M. we fared forth in the dim light of a brilliant crescent moon. Our donkey boy led the way. His name never became a mat-

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ter of record. During the weeks that followed he was known merely as "the donkey boy"; and, so, I suppose he will live and die. He was a good boy though, as donkey boys go, for the soles of his bare feet were shod with such horny cuticle he could have walked on red hot stove-lids.

A quivering silence had descended over the still land. Even the religious fanatics in the next village had gone to rest. The drums were still. Our donkeys had suddenly lost their gay and asinine spirits; a deep melancholy once more possessed them. The next fifteen hours they would devote to sleep—Allah willing.

As we plodded on through the darkness there was nothing to break the stark monotony, except once there was a sudden blur ahead and we found ourselves in the midst of a camel caravan. From our humble positions, the camels towered above us like huge, evil smelling ghosts; the boys, too, with burnous pulled over their heads, walked silently by like sheeted specters.

Then the soft light of dawn broke, and once more the birds woke the echoes. Some were green like parroquets, others black like crows with

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strange anomalous parrot-like beaks; the doves filled the air with their cooing, while the guinea fowl brought one to earth with an occasional painful squawk.

My saddle began to revolt me, and worse—I tried the relief of different positions; side-saddle, frontwards—even backwards. Then I got off and walked, to discover that while I had no appetite for a sitting position I cared still less about walking.

At eight-thirty we stopped at a rest house near a grass village. Promptly, smelling *bakshish*, the local Sheik brought us water and a pair of native couches of woven raw-hide. We had been warned against unboiled “casual water,” yet, as ours had long since vanished, we drank, and hoped for the best. A *tabu* had also been placed on native couches—they were supposed to be germ-carriers, if nothing worse—but down we flopped and luxuriated for an hour in a new position. The Sheik stood by and made futile efforts at witty conversation. We listened to everything, but comprehended nothing.

Then we were on our way again. The donkey

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boy, perspiring at every pore, began to show signs of distress. Gradually, he surrendered leadership and gravitated to the position of rear guard, where he blended with our dust cloud and soon vanished completely. His loss was a matter of no interest to us. The sun began to decant liquid flame down the back of our necks; and my donkey, abruptly deciding that he'd had enough, uttered a hollow groan and lay down. Lake, who had become a master of flagellation, was far ahead. I stood alone in the middle of a bare flat African plain, with a donkey that had made up its mind to be a complete ass. In a half-hearted way I ran through the usual formula; I persuaded, cajoled, threatened, cursed, twisted his tail like a cork-screw and lifted him bodily to his feet—only to see him collapse again. Then I jumped on his carcass with my hobnailed boots. Like an "inebriated lotus eater" he lay there through it all, dreaming no doubt of the bestial orgy he would indulge in when darkness fell. Then I let nature take its course, and sat down under a nearby tree.

Half an hour later the donkey boy materialized. There must be something telepathic about donkey

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boys, for while he was still some distance away the donkey fluttered a heavily fringed eyelid and in one convulsive movement sprang to his feet. Instantly, his whole expression changed. His nostrils dilated like a blooded stallion's. He quivered at the bit; in so many words he said: "What can I do if the tenderfoot insists on getting off and resting in the shade?"

At noon we reached Singa—forty miles, one nightmare and a zoological orgy from Makwar. Our first duty, of course, was to call on the Vice-Governor of Fung Province. As we sat in his cool sitting-room, we shattered one of the most sacred laws of tropical hospitality.

"How would you like a bottle of beer?" he suggested. As one man we acquiesced. He offered another and another. They vanished as though poured onto desert sands. With a defeated look, he pressed us no further.

"The first rule of travel in the blue," I told Lake afterwards, "is never to eat or drink supplies of these long-suffering officials, and here we've made a pair of tanks out of ourselves. We'll have to

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send him a case of beer when we get back to Makwar."

"After what you've just done, it would take a couple of kegs to indemnify him," Lake replied.

The rest of that day at Singa is a blank to me. We had camped *al fresco* in a vacant lot just off the main street—this was at the suggestion of Abdu, who recounted with suitable gestures how a scorpion had jumped out of the thatch of the rest house and fastened its fangs into the last occupant. "He didn't want to see us come to harm so early in the trip," he explained.

With a ground sheet beneath us, and the stars above us, though a certain privacy was lacking, we felt far less open to assault. After the session with the Governor's beer, I remember crashing into a steamer chair—then the world was a blank until Ali called me for dinner. This consisted of a thin soup, some kind of an egg balanced on a slice of tomato, a chicken balanced on some mashed potatoes, caramel custard and coffee. I only speak of these gastronomic matters to show what an Arab cook can accomplish with a few twigs and three or four stew pans.

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At six A.M. next morning, as we were breakfasting under a cloudless sky, several officers rode up to say "hello!" They looked so cool and immaculate that for once in my life I felt disreputable, as I looked down at garments that even now were beginning to show signs of wear and tear.

The camels were set in motion at once; for they had to be ferried over the Blue Nile in a small scow, while Lake and I were to hire native trackers at the office of the Vice-Governor. There was considerable formality connected with the office of Vice-Governor of Fung Province. Promptly at eight o'clock, a native sergeant and six askaris hove-to off his front porch; a native fife and drum corps hovered nearby; and the V.G., looking as though he'd just stepped out of a band box, fell in behind them. Then, to the sound of a smart rataplan he was escorted to his office. The flag was raised, the band played "God Save the King," everybody clicked heels and saluted and that office at least was open for business.

The preceding day the V.G. had ordered in all available trackers, or "Shikaris," as he called them, so fifteen or twenty lean brown men had gathered

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in his office for us to choose from. A choice was difficult. They all looked healthy, but not one could speak a word of English. This was rather depressing. At length, after looking their records up in the files, we chose one, Mubarak, then Nur and Sherief. Their wage was seventy-five cents a day, and for that they were supposed to stand by us to the death. They were not allowed to carry weapons.

Our relations with civilization now seemed at an end, so thanking the V.G., we prepared to fold our tents and depart.

"What about Abyssinians?" I enquired for the last time.

"They're an infernal nuisance," he answered. "The Governor was on the Dinder River only recently and had to pot one. But we'll be keeping track of you. There is only one other party up there — a Mrs. Blake — English — all alone — shooting."

"What on earth does a lone woman want up there?" I asked. It seemed a natural question.

"She isn't very strong. Went up there for a

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rest," he answered, which of course explained everything.

"Only one last thing occurs to me," I ventured with some hesitation. "We're taking thirteen Arabs and trickling into a region that isn't over populated with traffic cops. Neither Lake nor I speak Arabic. Are these boys foolproof?"

"You'll find them as sound as the Bank of England," said the V.G., "but a word of advice. These boys are real men. They're not Equatorial negroes. Never strike them, or knock them about. If one becomes insubordinate give him a 'chit' to me describing the circumstances, and send him back to Singa."

"Of course he'd gallop right back with the evidence and let himself in for the bastinado, or whatever?" I was somewhat incredulous.

"Like a homing pigeon," replied the V.G. "These men have no desire to live as outlaws, and they know punishment is certain if they've done wrong. We never fail to deliver it. You'll be able to count on them. They're splendid fellows."

Whereupon, without even leaving our permanent addresses, we mounted our donkeys and rode



"Are these Arabs foolproof?" I asked the V. G.



"As sound as the Bank of England," he answered.

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to the ferry. It was six weeks before we saw our next white face.

"It's really the simplest thing in the world to lose yourself, if you only set about it," said Lake, as Singa faded behind us.

The last of our camels were just being bundled into the antique scow, called a ferry, as we arrived. They were taking the matter seriously, and could hardly be blamed; for this ferry had evidently not been built for camel passengers. Three camels was its limit, and even that was stretching things a bit. By means of long unshaped saplings we were rowed over the blue waters. The landing place on the opposite shore was somewhat congested. West-bound traffic was brisk, but apparently insolvent, and the ferry men were firm, so it was piling up awaiting financial relief.

As we lunched in the shade, on fish cakes, goat's liver, potatoes and paw-paws, we watched the strange crowd with languid interest. One man twisted rope from wet bark, holding one end between prehensile toes; a pair of plutocrats under a nearby bush counted their money; some improved the shining hour in slumber; some bathed. The

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ferry made another trip, bringing in one load fifty-one people and three donkeys, by actual count. It was a moist passage. A traveling man with a camel, and a local herdsman with four bullocks, were rejected as passengers because they refused to "pay as they entered." A long argument ensued that was highly diverting to the ring of spectators. The life of a ferryman in these parts was evidently no sinecure.

We turned from the river, and set forth on our way to Abu Hashim.

It was supposed to be about an eight mile walk to our first camp. We spent it with the "twenty-two" missing birds: doves, cranes, bustards and guinea fowl. We fired nearly a hundred rounds without dislodging a single feather. That's hard to believe. Lake looked on the verge of apoplexy, and I was a little annoyed myself. But this always seems to happen at first, and one must not take his shooting too much to heart or he is apt to miss the beauties of nature.

The intense, almost vertical rays of the sun had baked the ground until it had split into one vast net-work of cracks a couple of inches wide and two

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or three feet deep. One advanced by stepping from one segment of parched earth to another, and it was many a day before we set foot on solid ground again.

As the sun set, a fat oily snake crawled across the path and disappeared down one of the cracks. It was a trivial matter in itself, yet it got one to thinking what a wonderful sanctuary for unpleasant things that system of cracks afforded. Yet that was the first and last snake we were to see in the Sudan. We were troubled no more by "varmints."

At last, a quarter of a mile away, we could see our camp. It was in the middle of a vast plain. The ground sheet had been spread; the table set, and on it the shamadans twinkled invitingly. It was flanked on either hand by our cots. The roof was the sky. It was our introduction to a life of Biblical simplicity. The feverishness of the world was gradually fading; our thoughts began to turn to elemental things—heat—thirst—hunger—the stalking and killing of game. The advance wavelets of a great ocean of peace began to fill our consciousness with their playful lappings.

CHAPTER IX

*The frigid tropics. The Dinder River. Hunting bush buck
with an Arabic dictionary.*

“The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like voices in a swound!”

AT least, that’s the way I felt about it, for during the night I nearly froze. The “howling like voices in a swound,” was doubtless the camels.

In the darkness several times white-robed figures passed along the path towards the ferry; natives from an outlying village on their way to taste the delights of Singa. Evidently one turned into a nocturnal animal in these regions, and pulling his toga snugly about his head to ward off the chill air, traveled at night.

At 4 A.M. Ali appeared with a candle, and called us. The air was so still the candle flame burned

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without a flicker. Nor had a single drop of dew fallen; clothes, blankets—everything, was bone dry.

I sat up in bed, and reaching down for my shoes rather gingerly, shook them out upside down. The picture of that oily snake slipping into the cracked earth the evening before still lingered. In fact, quite unbeknownst to Lake, I had indulged in the luxury of a small nightmare of my own an hour before.

Suddenly I'd awakened in a vast pit of blackness. On all sides of me the ground was grotesquely split into gaping cracks, from which an infinite number of snakes were silently oozing. Their eyes were large and bright. They were fixed on me in an unwinking stare. Inevitably—in deathlike silence—they glided towards me. They slipped over the ground sheet—one was in bed with me—they were coming in hundreds—oily, writhing bodies. I couldn't cry out. The best I could tear from my larynx was a plaintive unhuman cackle. I sprang up in bed and, reaching up, tried to chin myself on a star. It was a vain effort——

Then the mist began to clear. A few scrubby

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trees appeared dimly in the gloom. Not far away glowed the remains of a fire. Near it, on the ground, lay several human forms locked, for the sake of warmth, in loving embraces. One stirred, rose sleepily and threw more wood on the embers, then relapsed once more into slumber. Of course there were no snakes! How foolish! Yet, before I attempted the experiment of sleep again, I took the precaution of shaking out all my blankets.

For a moment Lake watched me, as I went through the motions of emptying out my shoes, then curiosity got the better of him.

“What’s the big idea?” he asked sleepily.

“You may think it effeminate,” I answered, “but if any thousand-legged bug, or dodo of some kind, has set up housekeeping in my shoes during the night, I want to know before I slip my dogs into them”—and try as I would in the days that followed I was unable to break myself of this habit.

“It was as cold last night as a stepmother’s caress,” he continued, blowing on his tea. “This isn’t the tropics—it’s the Arctic—and another thing, this ‘getting up so early you meet yourself going to bed’ takes some getting used to.”

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“Outside of that,” I murmured, “everything is all right, I suppose?”

“Sure it is,” he responded cheerfully. “This is the most satisfactory life I have ever led.”

At five A.M. we were pounding the trail. As we crawled along, without inflicting many casualties, we shot at guinea fowl or doves. A gazelle of some sort grazed far off among the thinly scattered trees. It never even raised its head to watch us pass. It was our first glimpse of honest-to-goodness wild life. Then we passed through patches of colossal grass, six or eight feet high, and so dry and brittle that at the slightest touch it broke into a dozen pieces jingling with the effect of breaking glass. For an hour we amused ourselves knocking it down with our riding truncheons.

Things began to pall a bit. To while away the time, we conversed on a wide range of subjects. After one long pause, interrupted only by the efforts of the donkeys to keep their feet from slipping into the network of cracks, Lake remarked apropos of nothing:

“No man should marry until he’s built up an income of at least twenty-five thousand a year.”

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And, merely to show to what intellectual heights one may soar when traveling donkey-back hour after hour, I replied:

"Love is like a sock on the nose, Lake—when it comes you forget all about mundane things." It sounded like a great truth, even in that barren wilderness.

"I don't agree with that," he answered. "You can always see it coming and dodge it, if you look alive."

After another pause, I continued: "One proposition we ought to agree on though is this: when we get into the game country, if one of us gets sick or stepped on by a near-sighted elephant, the other should go on and finish the trip—of course, after doing everything he can."

"I can agree to that without any trouble," said Lake. "It's a bargain."

After four hours of this, we breakfasted at Khamisa, a little cluster of grass huts. Five or six hundred camels were grazing about us, but now they were becoming an old story, and our appetites for eggs, goat kidneys, and tea were undiminished by their throaty cooing.

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Late in the afternoon we had our first glimpse of the Dinder River. Mubarak, the oldest and leanest of the *shikaris*, and Sherief, the youngest, informed us through Abdu that if we would send the camels and donkeys ahead, and make a short detour, we might get a shot at something. So off we went down a dry gully. Evidently much hunting of a predatory nature took place between its high banks, for its course was one confused mass of foot-prints—buck, gazelle, hyena, jackal and many of the soft-footed cat tribe.

Then we abruptly turned a corner, and almost fell out into the Dinder River—a solid mass of sand, stretching into the distance as far as the eye could see. The heat waves, billowing from its blistering surface, were the only suggestion of liquid refreshment that met the eye.

“Some river!” ejaculated Lake. “My holy aunt! It’s as dry as the annual report of the Anti-saloon League!”

But, even as he spoke, two sleek buck drifted out of the bushes on the opposite bank, and started to pick their way daintily across the sand. It was

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a lovely sight; the kind that stamps a picture on the mind, that never fades.

"What are they?" I whispered to Mubarak, pointing.

"Erin go bragh," he whispered back—or something that sounded much like it.

"Erin go bragh?" I queried in some surprise.

"La! la! *Abu nebah*," he whispered.

"Abu—come again—La, la,—what?" I hissed.

"La—means—no," whispered Lake.

"*Abu nebach—abu nebach—abu nebach*," repeated Mubarak, and began to jump up and down somewhat like a frustrated monkey.

"Now, that's perfectly ripping," I exclaimed hoarsely. "You are about to assassinate an abu nebach, Lake,—but what-in-sam-hill is it? It may not be legal to shoot 'em."

"Here's the little booklet published by the Sudan Government," he answered excitedly.

The two buck had picked their way across now, and were about to climb the steep bank. The low sun made their sleek coats shine like polished bronze. As they stood there, they represented the quintessence of lissom grace.



Ariel gazelle.



Waterbuck.

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"You'd better shoot," I warned Lake. "We'll find out what they are at the inquest."

At that instant the raucous cry of some strange bird startled them, and like a flash of dull red gold they bounded up the bank and vanished.

As they disappeared, Lake fired two hasty shots, but the only result was to start the echoes reverberating along the sandy course of the Dinder River.

"They were bush buck," I said, reading from the little booklet. "*Abu nebach*—bush buck—we must remember that next time."

And so we fired the first shot in the Battle of the Dinder! It did not echo round the world, but it made considerable of an impression in our own restricted environment.

The sun was not far from its cloudless horizon. We wended our way back to the path, and mounted our donkeys.

Multitudes of guinea fowl were going to roost high up in the limbs of their favorite trees. Against the sun they stood out like some kind of fantastic feathered fruit.

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An ancient Arab passed us in the dark, mounted on a mule decked with a romantic Arabian saddle. Over his arm was carelessly draped a blunderbuss, equipped with a flintlock of mammoth proportions. The flint by itself could be classed as a dangerous weapon: As for the blunderbuss, it was the kind of instrument one always pictures belching forth anything from pebbles to carriage bolts, and then bursting into a thousand pieces.

We passed a handful of grass huts. Cooking fires glimmered in the darkness.

"Abu Hashim?" I enquired.

"*Ey*," Mubarak replied. He pronounced it like "Eye." It meant "Yes." That much I had learned.

We turned into a brush enclosure. The boys were preparing camp.

That evening, as we sat having coffee under the stars in a state of glamorous relaxation, Abdu approached with the three *shikaris* for a consultation. They stood at attention in a row before us and, with Abdu as interpreter, we talked of many things and laid our plans for the following day. These evening séances developed into a permanent

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institution that resulted in much information. Much of it I fear was the product of Abdu's fertile brain, but that in no way detracted from its pungency, and we were satisfied.

"First of all I want a little scientific information," I remarked to Abdu this particular evening. "How do people live hereabouts? What is the price of eggs?"

"Four eggs, one piastre," he answered.

"Gad," said Lake, "that figures out less than fifteen cents a dozen—they don't even charge for the wear and tear on the hen."

"Chickens?" I asked next. They figured twenty-five cents a pair.

"All right. Now that's behind us, what of tomorrow?" I suggested.

"The *shikaris* say many elephants play around Abu Hashim," Abdu reported. "They make great nuisances and trample the *dura*. But it will be necessary to make early start."

"I know what you have in mind," said Lake wearily, "but I refuse to have breakfast until four-thirty tomorrow. I'm going to get a little rest."

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“That will be plenty,” agreed Abdu.

The rest of the evening we spent cleaning our guns and breaking out ammunition. There was an indefinable feeling of excitement in the air.

CHAPTER X

We set out for elephant, returning with a guinea hen. Sheiks quarrel over us—very flattering. Introducing ancient blind man who knew Gordon Pasha—very sad.

THAT night, in spite of three Jaeger blankets, the cold was a serious matter. There was the threat of chilblains in the air. At four-thirty A.M. the mercury in the thermometer became morbid and sank to fifty-two degrees; six hours later it frolicked up to one hundred and ten degrees with the most frivolous inconsistency. The change—fifty-eight degrees—was so marked one's pores failed to grasp just what was expected of them. At night if one used all the blankets on top he froze from below, if he used them beneath him he froze from above. What we needed was a good cork mattress, but as Lake suggested, "it was a fine time to think of that."

At five we were off with the three *shikaris*.

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"There's one thing about this elephant business we've got to remember," I warned Lake as we shuffled along in the dark. "They're as hard to lay your hands on as a disembodied spirit. It may take all the patience we've got before we even see the tail of one."

"Well," he answered, "all we've got to spend up here is time."

After an hour's walk we cut down to a water hole in the bed of the river. Surrounding it was a labyrinth of fresh elephant tracks. Evidently they'd been holding a caucus there during the night. In the trees, which overhung the water, a troupe of gray monkeys awaited the warmth of the sun's first rays. At the moment they seemed a trifle sad, as though monkey business was farthest from their thoughts. There is no more pathetic sight in nature than a cold monkey.

For the next seven hours we followed those tracks. They started fresh, and fresh they continued; we started fresh, but as the heat of the sun waxed we began to visibly wane and wither. The last three hours of the chase led us through the tall halfa grass, that jingled like breaking glass when

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touched. The well-defined trail became an inextricable maze. Several times the boys claimed we were right on top of them, and removing their white skull-caps, girded their loins for action. There was a moment of mad preparation. We each agreed on the spot at which we would shoot. The perspiration ran from us in rivulets, but always in the end the "tome" degenerated into a tall bush or tree.

I wore a pair of tennis shoes with thick soles of spongy crêpe rubber. For nearly three thousand miles I had lugged them, with the conviction that for stalking game they would make a mouse sound like a public nuisance, and so they did, but now I began to notice I was accumulating foreign matter on the soles of my feet—sticks, twigs, earth—anything I stepped on stuck and became a permanent fixture. The soles had begun to melt! It was as though I was shod with sticky fly-paper. A matted conglomeration, the size of a snow-shoe, gathered on each foot.

"I guess I'm through," I whispered to Lake. "I'd go big in Switzerland. I could tiddely-pom all over the place, but for tracking elephants these

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things are noisy and fatiguing." Then, with no warning whatever, the rubber became entirely liquid and ran down a crack in the earth. The relief was immediate.

At once I felt as light as a feather. The welts, vamps, inner-soles, and other internal organs of the healthy shoe, remained and flapped about my ankles, but my feet were as free as the air.

As near as I could discover, "esterah" (camp) was "etnane" — (two) (2) — hours away. This didn't look "quace" (good) to me any way I looked at it, so I remarked "tahel" (come on) several times, and a couple of other things that occurred to me on the spur of the moment, and we set out for home.

"Well, better luck next time," said Lake hopefully.

"Sure," I agreed. "The old ivory hunters used to have to follow an elephant trail two or three days sometimes, but not in rubber-soled shoes."

"If we could do it in a Ford we wouldn't get so hot," he suggested, which seemed quite reasonable.

Later that afternoon we each went out with a

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shikari on another search for elephants. There's one thing about the pachyderm, if he's in the neighborhood you never can tell when you'll stumble on him, so drifting about is not at all unprofitable.

In no time Mubarak and I were following fresh tracks in the sand of the alleged river. Until nearly dusk we followed them, expecting each time we rounded a bend to find an elephant blowing sand over his back. Then we gave up, and turned our attention to more promising game. A large flock of guinea fowl were feeding towards a clump of grass near the center of the river bed. "If we couldn't get an elephant we might as well bring home a guinea hen," I reflected. I certainly didn't want to go home empty-handed. So I stalked them on my stomach, snake fashion. Several clumps of grass dotted the sand here and there. At the time, I thought they looked somewhat strange and out of place. I fired. At the sound of the shot six brown men, naked except for a loin cloth, sprang into the air, each from his respective clump of verdure. The guinea fowl, uttering hoarse squawks, vanished. Then I realized I had

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intruded on the preserves of a local hunting party.

Their method of snaring guinea fowl was ingenious, even if it did require patience. A grass blind was constructed in the river bed; a three cornered net was loosely buried in the sand, and fastened down so that the twitch of a string running to the blind flopped it over on any birds foolish enough to wander within range. The sand was then baited with a sort of water cress and the hunter, concealing himself, waited anywhere from two to four hours for a band of guinea fowl to stray his way. Maybe he used mental persuasion, maybe he slept, but as a special inducement he ran trails of enticing succulent feed in all directions toward the river banks. It was evident these nimrods had been sitting there for hours, hoping, and just as victory was within their grasp I had arrived on the scene to dash the cup from their lips; which metaphor is no more mixed than were my feelings when I realized how easily I could have unintentionally bagged one of them instead of a bird. There was no room in my collection for an Arab's head—no matter how cleverly it was mounted.

Yet, they were very pleasant about it and

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seemed to look at the matter from a humorous angle, which proves, if anything, that intrinsically humor is brutal as well as vulgar—even in the Sudan.

The day was drawing to a close, so they folded their nets, and we tramped back to Abu Hashim while dik dik and gray monkeys frolicked about us.

“Did you get an elephant?” Lake enquired sarcastically, as I lay down my gun.

“No,” I answered, “but I got a guinea hen, and just missed an Arab.”

“We’d better move further South, where it’s legal to shoot people, before we get into trouble,” was his only comment.

The Mamur called on us. He was an educated Egyptian, who looked after the interests of the English in the district. He dealt us several cold hands of information, but we never raised him or even called him. “It rained June, July, August and September,” he informed us. “The Dinder then became a raging torrent; the land, a bottomless quagmire. Donkeys and camels got lost in the mud and weren’t found for weeks. Giraffes

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walked around with only their heads sticking out"—but what's the use. He was telling us things in the Sudan that were taken for granted even in Missouri. "During the remaining months," he went on, "a single drop of rain had never been known to fall." We thanked him. He left us.

After conferring with Abdu and the *shikaris* that night, we decided to move south to Hagor Tahir. There were too many people about Abu Hashim to suit us. The Chief pressed us to stay, and sang the praises of his local pachyderms. "They were so friendly and approachable—with ivory that dragged on the ground—and he would guarantee us one tomorrow!" He wanted the meat for his people, and did not attempt to conceal the fact.

But we were in the grip of the wanderlust, so five-thirty next morning saw us on our way. The temperature was forty-six degrees—the coldest we were to have in the Sudan. Not a hundred yards from the village was a maze of elephant tracks, made during the night while we slept. They were there—but where were they?

At eight A.M. we arrived at Hagor. The local Sheik provided us with a three-sided grass house

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and brought us Turkish coffee. Then he brought what Abdu called Persian tea, spiced and sickly sweet; lastly, he ordered up a bowl of Sudanese milk, which was a little beyond us. It didn't look as though it came from contented cows. But he was a most ingratiating, obliging Sheik.

"He wants elephant meat," Lake suggested.

"Don't blame him for that—so do we," I answered.

According to the Sheik, there were more elephant in his bailiwick than house flies, which was a broad statement for even a Sheik to make. As we sat there, several of his young men rushed up. They had just seen elephants—many elephants—colossal elephants. In fact, they were crashing about all over the place. It all acted on us like wine. With a new lease of life we stripped for action, and followed these boys out to battle.

For the next five hours we stumbled through elephant grass on spoor a month old. Then we returned to Hagar.

As we lunched, the Sheik from Abu Hashim sent over an Ambassador Plenipotentiary to say that "elephant were raising the very dickens over

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at his place and wouldn't we come back?" With a knowing look, the local Sheik whispered that "he had just received some confidential information about the elephant situation that would please us, and to sit tight." Competition was getting keen.

We called Abdu into conference.

"This is getting ridiculous," I said. "We can't keep rushing about hither and thither after phantoms, just to satisfy the local pride of these Sheiks. Anyone would think they were the Presidents of a couple of Chambers of Commerce and we were looking for a factory site."

"Yes, sir," agreed Abdu. "Do this perhaps. I will tell them that you will not go another foot after elephants unless they bring in the one sure sign for you to look at with your own eyes."

"What?" asked Lake.

"Droppings, sir, from their look you can tell at once how close the elephants are."

"Very well," I said. "Tell them just that."

It's needless to go into the harrowing details of what followed. But thirty minutes later the first evidence arrived. It was produced by a breathless messenger. Crowding on his heels

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came eight others, no less breathless, and all bearing evidence of the close proximity of elephants no less convincing. It became slightly embarrassing. Evidence continued to pile up, with scarcely an intermission, for the next three hours. Figuring conservatively, and working day and night, it would have taken us about a week to examine it all.

"I should say it was about time for Hagor Tahir to rest its case," Lake remarked, and he was right.

That afternoon we took a two hour ramble that distinctly failed to live up to the promise of the preceding three hours.

"Tomorrow morning," said the Sheik, and left the impression that there was much he could tell if Allah would let him.

The sunset was marvelous that evening. The West was a riot of soft color, that acted on one like a powerful drug; a drug that soothed, yet filled one with a strange ecstatic elation. A cool evening breeze sprang up. A caravan of fifteen camels padded in, burbling throatily. They loomed dim and weird in the half light. The cattle,

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sheep and goats were driven in. Here and there cooking fires flashed up. A woman's laugh rang out. Then, silence and peace settled over the primitive village.

We were breakfasting at three-thirty A.M. and away at four, this time mounted on our donkeys. A white-robed figure, with a candle lantern, led the way. For two hours we plodded through the darkness, then the first faint harbingers of dawn began to tint the East—"The Lord of Night shook off his drowsy-head." At once, the Arabs stopped and prepared to say their prayers. Fascinated, we watched them.

Facing the East, they hollowed out a hole in the dry grass, shaped like a wash basin; then kneeling, went through the pantomime of washing hands and face. This attended to, they bent their foreheads to the ground, chanting the prayers that Mohammed had contrived to suit such an occasion. More imaginary washing; more bending; more prayers. The primrose light faded. The tip of the red sun appeared above the edge of a cloudless world, and thus another day was born.

We left our donkeys in charge of the nameless

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donkey boy, to spend the next six hours crashing around sun-baked elephant grass. Fresh signs were conspicuous by their absence. We saw roan antelope, oribi, monkeys and guinea fowl, but nothing that dimly resembled our quarry. The monkeys seemed highly entertained by our stealthy actions and followed us, laughing audibly, until they wearied of the sport. Almost simultaneously we wearied of the sport ourselves, and from then on our progress through the jingling grass sounded like the crashing of cathedral windows.

"It looks as though there hadn't been an elephant around here for weeks," said Lake at lunch. "Those boys must have gone into the next county for their evidence."

"Let's move on to Beida," I suggested. "It's the last village before we break into the Great Beyond."

"Have we got to hunt elephant there?" Lake demanded. "I figure we've hoofed between fifty and sixty miles the last two days and I'm losing my appetite for ivory."

We put the question to Abdu. There were no

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elephants at Beida it seemed, so with sighs of relief the camels were ordered to depart.

In spite of the siren song the Sheik of Hagar warbled in an effort to detain us, we were just about to follow them when a lean ancient man appeared on a woeful donkey led by an urchin. He was stone-blind. He was assisted from the donkey. Tottering and with steps that hesitated and faltered, he was led before us. He groped for my hand; then, falling on his knees, covered it with kisses. It was a performance at once amazing and disconcerting. Lustily I yelled for Abdu, who was beginning to function as our vocal and auditory organs.

“Why all the osculation?”

In a voice that shook with age the old man was talking rapidly.

“He thinks you are English,” said Abdu. “He speaks of the old days when this land was thick with villages, and he was Sheik over them all—villages, each with many, many huts. Of how they were all destroyed by the Mad Mullah. Of how the English came at last and saved them.”

The old man paused, and leaned on Abdu’s arm.

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"In those days he knew Gordon Pasha," Abdu explained, his face softening.

Again the thin quavering voice spoke, while the sightless eyes stared fixedly into space.

"He say, 'Allah protect King George!' " Abdu translated, "and asks you to beg him to be good to his people. He say, 'the villages with many huts are gone now and life is hard, but the English will watch over them.' "

A crowd of interested spectators had gathered around us, and whether I did right or not I'll never know, but for the moment I became an English subject. As I looked into those ancient sightless eyes, I couldn't find it in my heart to do otherwise.

"Tell him," I instructed Abdu, "to set his mind at rest. The English will not fail his people now any more than Gordon Pasha did in the old days, or later, Kitchener of Khartoum. King George—the father of countless millions of people whose lives are hard—is ever striving to make their burdens lighter."

It all sounds banal and crude as I tell it, but if you could have seen the light that spread over the old man's face, as Abdu translated my feeble re-

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marks, you would have felt that the deception was justified. At that moment, I learned to thrill to the sound of the seven simple letters which spell the word: England!

Again, the old man fumbled for my hand, and falling to his knees, kissed it. Then Abdu led him to his woeful donkey and he disappeared, led by the urchin who had brought him.

For our part, we sounded "boots and saddles," and set forth on our way to Beida.

CHAPTER XI

A water-hole—this has nothing to do with golf. Tiger-fish. Crocodiles and lute playing. Wild life about us begins to multiply—and add and subtract. Ali reveals his Scotch-Irish-Nubian descent. In the grip of the blood-lust. Abyssinian poachers. Lion roars. Birds chirp in nearby bushes.

A BRAND-NEW Sheik met us at Beida, and with considerable pomp escorted us to a rest house a little distance from the village. He was a short bow-legged Sheik, and wore strapped to his waist a large curved sword like a scimitar—the only kind a bow-legged man should wear. The usual refreshments were received and filed; Turkish coffee, milk and a flat wafer constructed of pounded *dura*, in taste not unlike a sawdust pancake.

Then we strolled out to look at our first Dinder River water-hole. It was a quarter of a mile long and filled the entire bed of the stream; its water

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was a deep olive-green and gave the impression of unplumbable depths. Many "crocs" lay on its banks basking in the sun, while what appeared to be huge fish made its surface boil and eddy. We let loose a few rounds at the "crocs," and were promptly requested by a fleet runner to kindly shoot in another direction, as our bullets were raking the main street of the village, and they were not aware that war had been declared.

Lake went off, to return in a short time with a bush buck and ten guinea fowl; while I turned to the more peaceful pursuit of fishing. But fishing in the Sudan proved to be a rough and brutal sport, utterly devoid of philosophical relaxation. No sooner had I baited my hook with a piece of raw meat and cast it into the green depths than there was a rush, a splash, a boiling eddy, a small tidal wave that submerged my lower extremities, and I found my line bitten off clean, as though severed by the edge of a razor. Apparently the pool was inhabited by man-eating sharks and killer whales. A bomb-gun and Eskimo harpoon would have been more appropriate than a fish-pole.

I attached a leader of hay-wire, and though I



They were really very nice—those water-holes.



Their mouths were lined with a substance like gutta percha—and their bridgework was perfect.

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withstood the shock of strike after strike, it was utterly impossible to plunge the hook home. The mouths of these fish were lined with some substance like gutta percha, and their bridge work was perfect. At length the monotonous repetition of baiting the hook began to pall, so abandoning the fish pole I merely threw them the raw meat bit by bit. They would have gotten it anyway, for the world owed them a living. The water seethed with hidden violence. What would have happened to anyone foolish enough to fall into this bowl of goldfish is merely an interesting academic question. Women and children, bearing earthen jars, came to the water's edge to draw off fluid supplies, while large staring eyes gazed up at them from the gloomy depths. These were the famous tiger-fish of the Sudan, equipped with protruding teeth that closed on the outside of their mouths.

It was a bucolic scene. As the sun sank, many birds circled around the water-hole, and in the village a man sang some ditty of vague longing pitched in a high minor key, accompanying himself on a tom-tom.

Even Ali now appeared in a new rôle, for I re-

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turned to camp to find him plucking away on a sort of bastard lute. Its body looked like an old cigar box; its neck like the back of a steamer-chair. He, too, crooned his ode to the setting sun. Perchance, within his doltish breast, fluttered the soul of a troubadour! Then Abdu, martinet that he was, came and rudely took it away from him. It was time to set the table for supper; lute-playing must wait. "He is a big damn fool," he muttered as he returned to his cook-fire.

We spent the next day recuperating from our elephant hunting, but managed to do a six hour hike and play hide and seek with wart hogs, roan and buffalo. For the first time we saw a swarm of locusts at work. They darkened the sky and devastated the land, but paid dearly for their vandalism; for above them fluttered myriads of birds, gorging themselves in turn. The country-side was strewn with gluttonous feathered bodies in a state of bulging repletion.

Then we said good-bye to Beida and gave the Sheik a letter of recommendation. We gave all the Sheiks letters of recommendation. It was customary, but as the Sheiks could not read, our fan-

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cies frequently led us into devious and unflattering paths in their composition.

The sun had not yet risen as Beida disappeared in the trees. It was the last grass village we would see for weeks. Henceforth we were to live on the land.

At the end of the first mile we became conscious of a strange cavalcade that followed in our wake. It was as though the village had come up by the roots and decided to join our safari. Old men, young men, boys and donkeys!

"Meat hunters," I suggested.

"Do they think we're running a butcher shop?" said Lake.

"Once," I reminded him, "Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia said: 'Fish and guests go bad in three days.' That is a maxim, even in Philadelphia. Down here a leg of oribi goes bad in three hours—while guests may linger. We can't use all the meat. Let 'em come."

That afternoon we camped at another pool—a pretty rushy dingle, known as Regeiba—while nearby the villagers of Beida prepared to spend the night. At intervals of ten miles or so these pools

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appeared in the dry bed of the Dinder with mathematical precision. Springs fed them, no doubt, for they never dried up; they were amazing oases in the midst of sun-baked barrenness.

This particular pool was alive with "crocs." They rimmed its sandy edges, as they lay sunning themselves, like eyelashes around a watery eye. We "strafed" one as he slept. At once the Arabs became hysterical. They seemed to hold a peculiar aversion for crocodiles. One strapping young man, in particular, became very emotional. He jibbered and slobbered, bit his knuckles and shook in every limb. Then, when the "croc" with a few spasmodic wriggles managed to slip into the water, he was in after it up to his neck; feeling for it with his bare feet in the ooze of the bottom. It seemed a suicidal act, yet in time he was followed by other boys until the water looked like a collegiate swimming-pool. And while they did not find the "croc," none of the "crocs" found them, which was a relief.

This was our first introduction to the boy, Zak. He was rechristened at once, "Wild Bill."

While the sun was hot our ground-sheet was draped above us like an awning. In its luxurious

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shade we lolled like potentates. The temperature was just one hundred degrees. Later, when the earth was dark, it was lowered and spread on the ground as usual.

Accompanied by Wild Bill and the three *shikaris* we strayed over the country-side at sunset, committing nuisances on wart hogs and oribi. At one point we passed the tracks of a poor old elephant who had prolonged his visits to the lowlands until overtaken by the rains. His tracks, baked hard by the sun, resembled a series of huge post-holes about three feet deep. Each step must have been agonizing labor. It made one perspire to think of him scrunching through the mud. It must be a sorry thing to be an elephant when the ground is a mess under foot. Methodically, the footprints disappeared into the South, toward the rocky foothills of Abyssinia.

And towards the south we followed them ourselves next morning, bound for a pool known as Erief El Dik. The wild life about us began to multiply—and add and subtract—for the matter of that. As we turned a sharp bend in the sandy river bed, we surprised a wildcat in the act of

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sinking its fangs in some small hairy rodent. The rodent was objecting. The wildcat escaped our rain of lead; the rodent was accidentally killed. It was a strange animal looking like a wharfrat with erysipelas, poor thing.

Now we were obliged to make a long detour to avoid a grass fire that traveled with the speed of an express train, through the desiccated herbage. Far and near it filled the air with a roaring like that of a great waterfall. Around its flanks floated the inevitable multitude of birds, gobbling up the bugs and insects driven into the air by the heat and powerful up-draught.

As the devouring flames swept on, buck, gazelle and the strange furry citizens of the hidden places madly broke cover, and without standing on the order of their departure, sought more inflammable regions. Savage life was evidently no less complex than a metropolitan existence.

Then we reached our pool, and it was a miniature paradise. Camp was pitched on a high bluff under some umbrageous trees. Below us the water lapped and played against the bank, with soothing, succulent little lappings that were almost



Then we reached our pool—and it was a miniature Paradise.



Small weaver birds. The air hummed with the throbbing of their tiny wings. They darkened the sky. For a solid hour they continued to pass.

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enough to convince one that the brutal heat of the sun was nothing but an hallucination.

Every afternoon, before setting out on our fell mission of death, we had tea—an insipid curtain raiser for the drama of violence—but pleasant and soothing as far as we were concerned. It was served by Ali, with considerable formality, for he had received an English training. But we who had not been so fortunate failed, I'm afraid, to live up to the sartorial requirements of the occasion, for as a rule our costumes consisted of nothing but flannel shirts, socks and slippers. But there was no one to raise objections. We were sole arbiters of fashion. It was wonderful!

Ali, the lute-player with the vacuous face and the soul of a troubadour, always referred to the native members of the party as "niggers," and managed when he did so to load his voice with considerable snobbishness. His own oily integument could have scarcely been blacker. So the reason for this air of superiority naturally excited our curiosity.

"Ali," we said as we sipped our tea, "you call

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these other well meaning boys 'niggars.' Where do you come from yourself?"

"Nubia," he answered with pride, after the question had percolated.

"Well, what do you call yourself then?" we persisted.

"Scotch-Irish," he replied.

"As long as he doesn't claim to be a descendant of Peter Pan we'll let it pass," said Lake.

The "hot spot" of his English vocabulary was a word that sounded like "gibbet." It meant "give it" or "take it," according to the necessities of the case.

We began to feel the fascination of his personality, so we pressed our questions further.

"All right," we admitted, "conceding you are of Scotch-Irish-Nubian extraction, what's this alleged language you speak? Where do you come by a word like 'gibbet'?"

"That's Scotch-English," he informed us, after weighing the matter.

"I move we adjourn," said Lake, so we went hunting.

Personally, I played hide and seek with some

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large herds of Ariel gazelle, without sanguinary results. They were so vital and full of svelt grace it produced a thrill merely to watch them, though the *shikaris* evidently did not view the matter in quite the same light. I think they began to suspect me of failing mentality. Then, as the shadows fell and the west toned down to a deep orange, we turned homewards along the river bank and ran plunk into a herd of sixty roan drinking at a water-hole. Now the roan is another matter; a large antelope, nearly the size of a moose, with long straight horns and a mane like a horse's, it is a trophy worth having, so at once the excitement was intense.

They winded us immediately, and began to file up the steep bank. Once on level ground they loped awkwardly toward the protection of the bush with the wooden-jointed grace of a troupe of children's rocking-horses. Their manes shook in the breeze, their long rapier-like horns bobbed back and forth. As they breasted the bank they appeared, one by one, for a brief moment silhouetted against the deep orange of the western sky; awesome, wild looking animals.

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The hunting frenzy possessed us—Arabs and Nordic alike. We had found a common denominator; differences of creed and color vanished. Once I tripped Mubarak—on purpose—he was in the way; once Nur, an efficient, dignified Arab if there ever was one, grabbed my head in both hands and screwed it violently around until I could see the same dim shape he could. For the moment our motives were identical. We were killers. As each fantastic animal appeared, I fired. The air reverberated. The ground shook with hoof-beats. The Arabs danced and uttered pungent Arabian oaths. In another language I too swore and danced with no less violence. The last one disappeared into the purple shadows. They were gone. In the gathering darkness we pursued them like wolves with the tang of blood in their nostrils until the chase became futile.

Then we stumbled home in the dark. Once more we became normal human beings, slipping again into our respective social grooves. For my part, as the blood-lust cooled, I found myself walking through the dark clad in nothing but a flannel shirt and a pair of hobnailed boots; a perilous adventure



*Eren Ali with feet like a pachyderm's and the soul of a troubadour
plucked on a hybrid lute.*

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in which spiny twigs and scabrous tree-boles supplied most of the waning lust, while I supplied the blood. It was punishment that recalled skiing in a Swiss forest.

Lake had bagged some Ariel and a waterbuck, And in the dark the camels and various citizenry went after them. A half dozen cooking-fires sprang up, and a spirit of serene contentment settled over Erief El Dik.

This night, as the *shikaris* lined up for the usual confab, they were more alert than usual.

"What's wrong?" we enquired of Abdu.

"Abyssinians now any time," he answered. "*Shikaris* want the gentlemen to eat dinner while it is light from now on."

"Yes?"

"Because, with lamps burning on the table the Abyssinians see them far off. They creep up so—" he dramatized an Abyssinian creep—"and shoot us all from the bushes."

"Now what do you think of that?" said Lake.

"We can't let these boys think we're scared of Abyssinians," I suggested, "or they may get a

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touch of religion some night and do some skull tapping on their own account."

"Tell 'em," said Lake turning to Abdu, "that we eat at our regular time—we always eat at our regular time. We burn the shamadans on the table—that's what they're for, and if any assassins come fooling around this camp we'll have the English send up a gun boat and blow 'em to hell."

"Yes sir," answered Abdu.

Suddenly, far toward the south, there were three deep thunderous roars ending in a series of grunts. In spite of the mellowing effect of distance, the air seemed to pulse and vibrate with their hollow throaty echoes. As they died away, the world sank into silence for a moment.

"What?" said Lake.

"Lion, sir," replied Abdu.

"Well at last we've arrived," I remarked, and we went to bed.

In the darkness we lay on our cots listening to the sounds that rose from the pool below us. It was being violently agitated by galvanic movements. Vast bodies under perfect control were rushing to and fro. There were gigantic splash-

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ings, frenzied pursuits and cosmic gurglings. Chaos reigned. Ever and anon some great body drew up under the bank where we lay, and uttered a sigh that sounded like a gale of wind in the top of a pine forest. Life was abundant, savage and vociferous.

In the nearby bush, a strange chirping ebbed and flowed. Now it rose to a shrill piping, almost a roar; again, faded away to nothing; a brand-new sound with a melody all its own.

"If I were you," I called over to Lake, "I wouldn't try any sleep-walking tonight." There was no answer, and from his deep regular breathing I realized that he slept.

CHAPTER XII

Charged by an infuriated buffalo—touchy animal—all we did was shoot at him. Camp festooned with raw meat.

Patriarchal scene. "Bakshish for Buffalo—my word."

Scorpion on the dining-room rug.

WHEN the dawn touched the east with soft colors all was still in the pool. Its surface lay like a sheet of glass, and gave back in tremulous prismatic tints the glamorous picture of a new day. But on its slimy bottom lay scaly monsters with fetid breath, sunk in obscene slumber, which proves they were nothing but normal healthy monsters after all.

Now we discovered the source of the spirited chirping in the nearby bush. Precisely as the edge of the sun tipped the horizon, a stream of small weaver birds issued forth and flew down the river to their feeding grounds. The air hummed to the throbbing of their miniature wings. Out they came,

CHARGED BY ANGRY BUFFALO

in unbelievably dense masses, more and more and more. They darkened the sky. It did not seem as though there could possibly be another bird left in the whole Sudan. Yet, for a solid hour they continued to pass. Then, with an abruptness almost startling, they were gone.

"How many?" I asked.

"Millions—billions—but count 'em yourself," said Lake.

That night, exactly half an hour before the sun set, they returned. Again, the column was an hour in passing. Again, the air was vibrant with their nervous twittering. Snatching a tremulous drink from the glassy surface of the pool they went to rest.

As we shoved off for our morning hunt, Abdu approached.

"When the gentlemen are away," he said, "we have no way of protecting the camp if the Abyssinians come. Will the gentlemen be willing to leave me a rifle?"

"I'm getting fed up with this stuff," grumbled Lake. "What do they think this is, the first act of a mystery play?"

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"The gentlemen must remember that if the Abyssinians come they cut our throats and laugh. They are armed; we are not. The government forbids it. Can you blame us for feeling uneasy?"

"No," said Lake. "Not if they laugh while they're cutting your throats."

So, to cheer his lonesome moments, we left Abdu a shot-gun and a few rounds of buck-shot.

"I know one thing," said Lake. "As long as he has that gun I don't come within a quarter of a mile of this camp without waving a flag of truce."

A half an hour after leaving camp we were stealthily treading narrow game-trails through a dense thicket. Beneath our feet were many tracks, but those that stirred our fancies most, and added the glamor of suspense to the scene, were the fresh tracks of buffalo—fresh, and as large as soup plates.

Suddenly halting, Mubarak whispered the word "Gamus." As though he had uttered a magic charm we at once underwent a mental and physical change. We became tense, alert, predatory. Slowly we crept forward. The bushes finally

CHARGED BY ANGRY BUFFALO

yielded to a small open glade, and in its midst the bluish black backs of twelve lusty buffalo appeared above the grass. Closer we crept, and closer—until it seemed as though we could almost reach out and touch them. Then one raised its head, looked us straight in the eye and let out a bellow. It might be said he took the words right out of my mouth, for I was just on the edge of letting one myself. Convulsively, I gave him a barrel of the Cordite rifle. With a crash he fell. Instantly, another faced us with blood-shot eyes. No less convulsively I released the other barrel. Down it went in turn. A sensation of wild exultation swept over me. Two of the most ruthless and dangerous animals of Africa lay dead at my feet. Nonchalantly—as killers do—I broke my rifle and started to fumble for a cartridge. Then, like a flash, the first one jumped to its feet and dashed madly at us. With protruding eyes I watched him come. Dimly I heard Lake fire. It sounded as though someone had let off a pop-gun in my ear. Again, the buffalo dropped; this time to lie crumpled in an irrevocable annihilation. He lay twelve yards from me. I know it was twelve

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yards, for Euclid could have measured it no more accurately.

"Thanks," I said to Lake.

"What for?" he asked.

"Tell you later," I replied.

In the meantime the other animal had scrambled to its feet, and leaving a trail abundantly strewn with blood, entered the tall grass.

"Come on," said Lake.

"We don't go in there," I answered decisively. "They loop back on their trail and wait for you like harpies." But, then, Wild Bill uttered a series of yodels that made the welkin ring and, in spite of all our warnings, plunged in followed by the rest of the *shikaris*.

"We can't let them go in there unarmed and get themselves killed," complained Lake, and popped in after them.

"I think I'd rather be with the gang myself," I murmured after a look at the trampled glade, and breaking one of the most elementary rules of buffalo hunting, followed.

A quarter of a mile away Wild Bill was baying like a bloodhound.



Leaving a trail of blood the buffalo entered the tall grass.



The autopsy was brief; the work of the shining knives efficient.

CHARGED BY ANGRY BUFFALO

"He's treed it," said Lake.

"What do you think this is, a coon-hunt?" I expostulated.

We followed the blood-curdling sounds, to find that the buffalo had sought sanctuary in a small dense patch of bush. But the patch of bush was not five yards from the blood trail we followed. The beast had run true to tradition and stood by his own trail waiting for his unknown enemies. But now he was too sick to care; besides like a matador with St. Vitus' dance Wild Bill danced about him. The battle was over.

From nowhere four camels and a group of smiling "meat hunters" materialized. The autopsy was brief; the work of the shining knives efficient. An hour later, in the manner of a triumphant procession, we entered camp. It was about half past nine.

"Queer," said Lake, "but I'd be tearing off a couple of yards of beauty sleep just now if I was in Paris, and here we've done a day's work and had a rattling good time already." Yet, though I was listening for it, I could detect no note of regret in his voice.

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Another hour, and the buffalo meat had been cut into strips and hung up to dry on every available bush surrounding our sylvan abode. The red, raw festoons lent still another note of savagery. Armed with a long stick a boy "rode herd" on it, for as the smell of blood floated down the wind the vultures gathered. They stood among us on the ground in a dense ring, or sat motionless as images in nearby trees, waiting for the opportunity to garner some of the rich harvest. In appearance, they were at once sad, melancholy and resentful. They seemed to feel they were being foully defrauded of a natural inheritance. In a spectacular burst of energy I counted one hundred and thirty-eight, and then relapsed into a languor no less spectacular. What possible good could result from a census of gluttonous vultures!

The twenty odd meat hunters, radiating a spirit of peaceful contentedness, settled down to various tasks. One twisted grass rope; another flung his donkey on the ground upside down, and tying its legs, removed ticks from sundry inaccessible portions of its anatomy. One apparently told stories to a grave but attentive circle of listeners. He made

CHARGED BY ANGRY BUFFALO

ing grounds. We were always moving on—and on. It was a nomadic life, and that was not the least of its charms. We said good-bye to the sullen-eyed vultures and glad-eyed meat hunters; for here they turned back, with donkeys staggering under monumental loads of the choice nourishment. They requested a letter stating that the meat was honestly come by. They got it. We parted, and now our cavalcade was reduced to five camel boys, the donkey boy, four personal servants and four *shikaris*. Wild Bill had officially joined us. He yearned for adventure; and there was possibly a lurking hope that bakshish might materialize. He was courageous to the point of eccentricity, so we could not deny him.

It was an uneventful day. For some distance we followed the fresh tracks of two leopard in the bed of the river, but the sand proved so cloying we gave it up for the more solid footing of the sunbaked plain. It was a poor exchange. The ground was now so preposterously cracked that, while the spongy feet of the camels spread over them easily, the small hooves of our donkeys were continually slipping through. Then they pitched

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dried fruit and Turkish coffee. It was a culinary achievement, a gastronomic caress.

Now the *shikaris* lined up and spoke impressively.

"What now?" said Lake. "More Abyssinian hookum?"

"They ask for bakshish," explained Abdu.

"What for? Do they think they're in Egypt?" I demanded.

"They say when gentlemen kill buffalo they generally give bakshish," Abdu continued. Here was a new one.

"That's ridiculous," said Lake. "We can't keep a set of books for the Game Warden, and fork out small change to these fellows every time we shoot anything. That's reducing a hunting trip to a cash register basis."

It was easy to agree to that. "Tell 'em," I instructed Abdu, "that when they deliver us safely to the Governor at Singa we'll see about it. And just remind them that the Governor thinks the world of us." And the matter was laid on the table.

At dawn we moved on again seeking new hunt-

CHARGED BY ANGRY BUFFALO

ing grounds. We were always moving on—and on. It was a nomadic life, and that was not the least of its charms. We said good-bye to the sullen-eyed vultures and glad-eyed meat hunters; for here they turned back, with donkeys staggering under monumental loads of the choice nourishment. They requested a letter stating that the meat was honestly come by. They got it. We parted, and now our cavalcade was reduced to five camel boys, the donkey boy, four personal servants and four *shikaris*. Wild Bill had officially joined us. He yearned for adventure; and there was possibly a lurking hope that bakshish might materialize. He was courageous to the point of eccentricity, so we could not deny him.

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on their noses. This in turn spread me out on earth hotter than a stove-lid. All the evil in my nature rose to the surface. Donkeys are vile!

That noon, in the sun, the ground was one hundred and thirty-three degrees. But one did not really suffer. Though one perspired copiously and continuously, the air was so dry a constant evaporation took place which kept the skin quite cool. On the same principle our water was kept at a pleasant temperature. Coarse canvas water bottles were hung from a tripod of sticks, and the rapid evaporation did the rest.

Our first and last scorpion appeared on the ground sheet that evening as we ate dinner.

"What'll we do?" asked Lake, as it swung up over the edge and sniffed the air.

"What have we got a personal servant for?" I answered, and yelled for Ali. "Chase it," I ordered. The familiar words awakened a sleeping memory.

"It no hurt," he answered soothingly.

"Well, chase it anyway," I pressed him.

So he abolished it with his bare foot. It was the only flaw in an otherwise perfect dinner.

CHAPTER XIII

Introducing the honey complex. Abdu breaks Ali's lute—on purpose. The native dagger with the wriggly blade.

*Pursuit of phantom elephant. Sweet chocolate melts
—disappears in a crack in the ground. Sunset
just before moon rise—pretty.*

THAT night a lion made himself a public nuisance around camp. Camels, donkeys and Arabs were restless and wakeful. At best, the camel is a temperamental animal, and given the slightest excuse would far rather spend the night cooing and regurgitating than sleeping. So the brief nocturnal period was rather broken by vocal discord.

In the morning we followed its fresh predatory tracks for an hour in the sandy bed of the river. Then they led to hard ground, and vanished. It would have been next to impossible to find him in the high grass that covered the country-side. So, as the boys stumbled on a tree full of honey at this

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point, we shifted our interest from lion-chasing to honey-gathering.

It was the first indication we had of their weakness for the brownish, sticky product of the bee. It amounted to an ungovernable passion, and in the days that followed came nearer causing insubordination than any other single temptation. One doesn't like to begrudge an Arab anything as beneficial as a good drench of honey, yet right at the climax of a long tedious stalk it is rather painful to see your trackers suddenly give over and start plundering bee's nests. Those boys would have committed anything from arson to barratry in the gratification of this mania.

Invariably the bees selected a hollow tree as a depository for their stickiness. So the Arabs simply smoked them with whisps of grass until they were half unconscious, and then committed the rape of the comb. There were always some bees less thoroughly anesthetized than the others. They did their best with the weapons at their disposal, but the results were discouraging for both parties.

We stayed a little too long at this bee carnival;



We started out for lion—but ended up honey-hunting.



The honey complex was the ruination of the boy efficiency. The boys would have committed anything from arson to barratry in the gratification of this mania.

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the sun rose high in the sky and grew oppressively hot. Yet, before we reached camp, we were obliged to sit through still another honey orgy. Abdu was not there to act as our mouthpiece, and all the Arabic words we knew, placed one on top of the other, wouldn't have made a verbal hurdle for a toddling babe.

"Esterah" (camp), said Lake.

"Abiligah" (the Lord knows what), said Nur, and licked his fingers one after the other like a sword swallower.

"Un-quace" (ungood), Lake shot back, growing moist and unattractive.

"La la," retorted Wild Bill, removing half a pound of thoroughly masticated wax from his facial orifice, and filing it in his turban for future reference.

"It's the heat," I suggested. "All the boys seem pecky today. Give 'em enough beeswax, and they'll founder themselves. Then they'll go home." So we sat down in the shade, and watched some wild dogs playing about in the sand far to the south.

That afternoon it was so hot we just lay about

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camp and panted. It was the kind of disintegrating heat that causes one's mind to dwell on brutal crimes, and contemplate murderous assaults with bland insouciance. But it did not deter Ali, as the sun began to sink below the acacias, from unslinging his lute and emitting the faltering notes that passed, with him, for warbling.

For some time this continued. It became monotonous. The strings of this lute were all tuned the same—that is to say, they were not tuned at all.

There was a sudden commotion under the bush that served the boys as a shelter. With an inhuman cry Abdu leapt to his feet, and snatching the idiotic instrument from Ali's grasp broke it into a dozen pieces over his knee. Then he raised both clenched and trembling fists above his head, and stood over the astonished Ali a picture of quivering menace. "Allah—allah—ALLAH!" he shouted in a blood-curdling crescendo.

"Good Lord, he'll dash the boy's brains out next," I yelled.

But before the words were out of my mouth Ali's expression had undergone a complete trans-

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formation, in successive stages—from lyric imbecility, to blank amazement, to bestial anger. With ominous deliberation his hand reached beneath his tunic, to reappear clutching a native dagger with wriggly shiny blade. His first pass missed Abdu by a matter of inches; his second and third were mere gestures, made as they both circled around the bush. He was uttering whining noises like an animal; a long string of foam hung from his lips. Abdu was keeping well in the lead. On their second revolution of the bush, Sherief stuck out his foot, and Ali crashed to earth.

Fascinated, we watched for the inevitable retaliation. “Now for bloody acts and human agony,” flashed through my mind.— But there weren’t any. It was the flattest proceeding I’ve ever witnessed, outside amateur theatricals. Nur picked Ali up. Abdu took the knife and threw it over toward the cook-fire, then in a tone of voice that registered the quintessence of disgust he addressed a few remarks to Ali, and started to prepare dinner.

“What shall we do?” said Lake.

“Leave it lay,” I answered, which was probably

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the faultiest grammar that fell from my lips in the Sudan.

An hour later Ali was serving dinner as usual. Complete normalcy had settled over the camp once more. The heat was abating.

The next day we moved to Khor el Shems—always further south towards the Abyssinian border. We drifted lazily along all day, shooting at this or that, or lolling about in the shade. It was evening when we reached Shems. Abdu was in the lead. As he reached the edge of the high river bank and looked over, he beckoned violently. We arrived on the run, just in time to see six elephants disappearing into the face of a lurid setting sun.

While the boys prepared camp, I pondered on the maze of tracks that surrounded the water-hole. In addition to those of the elephants, who evidently thought it was Saturday as they had indulged in large scale lustral operations, there were the huge fresh imprints left by two lions. There is always an irresistible fascination in following the slot of a lion. These led close in under the high bank toward the spot where the elephants had demolished it, sliding down to the water. The light was

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blood red; the scene, raw and savage. It was just dawning on me that it was careless to stroll under a ten foot bank from which any one of half a dozen unpleasant animals might drop on one, when not five feet from my head there was a blood-curdling cry; a cry full of indignation and venom. In one convulsive leap toward the center of the river-bed I covered more ground than I like to mention in print, to find nothing more blood-thirsty than a great long-legged water fowl looking quizzically down at me from above. Yet it was my last experiment in walking under anything in Fung Province.

“Well, I suppose we’re in for another elephant marathon in the morning,” said Lake at dinner. “It gives me prickly heat to think of it.”

“Even the Sudan has its obligations,” I reminded him, “and elephant-chasing is one of ’em.”

We were off while the light was still dim; over a patch of burnt ground where the cloud of ashes that enveloped us made us look like chimney sweeps, and then onto the broad obvious trail, leading straight into the west, they had left the evening before. It was pleasant walking, for the

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ground was flattened out as though a steam roller had just passed over it. They were not far ahead of us either. There was plenty of evidence of that. They had been feeding as they loafed along, ripping branches from nearby trees and chewing off the leaves and tender twiglets. The more indigestible portions were scattered by the wayside, and with wood pulp in various stages of mastication our trail was plentifully strewn.

"That's a fine kind of breakfast to start the day on," Lake observed. "It looks as though a fair sized acacia was only a hors d'oeuvre for them."

Then we came to a patch where several acres of fine trees, eight to twelve inches in diameter, lay scattered over the ground, as though they had stood in the path of a tornado—the work of our friends the elephants. Their method of destruction was simple, consisting merely in wrapping their trunks about a tree, twisting it several times round on its own axis until it resembled a stick of peppermint candy, then pulling the whole up by the roots and casting it to the ground. It was all obviously done in a spirit of frolic—pure animal spirits—for there was no food value here.



The elephants wrapped their trunks around a tree and after twisting the stem round and round cast it to the ground.



"Playful little fellows," said Lake.

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We picked our way through the splintered timber. It was a scene of sad and wanton devastation.

"Playful little fellows," said Lake thoughtfully. "It's easy to see how such high-spirited citizens could pull one's head off and use it for a bowling ball."

On the trunks of numerous trees there were muddy abrasions eight or ten feet from the ground, where one of them had indulged in the sensual pleasure of a colossal scratching. Such trees showed signs of being badly bent. When an elephant really puts his mind on scratching himself something is apt to give.

"It must be great to be an elephant," mused Lake. "Think of having all your pleasurable sensations magnified a hundred-fold; the enjoyment of a good dinner; the glimpse of a pretty girl—even the simple pleasure of scratching your back on the door knob—all expanded to mammoth proportions."

"The drawbacks are obvious," I told him, for it was far too hot for much of this kind of thing. "When you were scared, when you got stuck in the mud, or got indigestion from eating the

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branches of trees—it would be a hundred times more racking. The neighborhood would have some right to complain.”

For five hours we briskly followed their trail; over burnt ground, through high grass or thinly scattered mimosa trees. It always seemed as though the next moment would reveal them standing in the shade of some tree in “prehistoric meditation.” The signs were so undeniably fresh. But we were chasing bubbles that broke just as we reached out to grasp them; rainbows, chimeras. At length, we surprised a herd of thirty-seven giraffe. I say we surprised them, but we were even more surprised than they were. The astonishment was mutual. After looking us carefully over with their large liquid eyes, they turned on their heels and shambled away after the elephants, clearing the country of every living thing. This closed the elephant act.

Without a single dissenting vote we slumped down in the shadow of the first tree, to lay for the next three hours dead to the world.

“The worst of this is,” said Lake, as we drank our cold tea and pecked at our cold meat, “it’s just

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as far going back as it was coming out." And strangely enough he was right. It was about fifteen miles both ways.

Among the supplies were several cakes of sweet chocolate. They had started on safari as flat oblong packages neatly wrapped in tin-foil. But, as we penetrated into Fung Province and the shafts of the sun struck them, they underwent many astonishing changes. One day their conformation was spherical, another rhomboidal and sometimes they resembled an unilateral trapezoid. Somehow all the chocolate got on the outside, while all the tin-foil got on the inside. Of an evening we used to wander to the camel boxes to see what shape the chocolate was that day. It was a matter of great speculative interest.

On this particular morning we had ordered Ali to throw it into the sack which contained our pastoral lunch. Now, when we looked for it, it was gone. The tin-foil was there and pieces of its flamboyant paper wrapper, but the chocolate, reduced to a thin brownish fluid by the incandescent heat, had vanished forever. It was as though we had suffered the loss of an old friend. Doubtless

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this seems devoid of pathos to one surrounded by urban conveniences, but in Fung Province it is the kind of thing that fills one with consternation.

Somehow we got home.

I dimly remember playing about with some giraffe; a long stalk after a herd of tiang, much complicated by a couple of camels that had been sent out from camp to carry in the elephant steaks. Though thwarted in this particular, two lusty tiang bit the dust, to be draped intact on their elongated withers, so all was well. Again, I have a faint recollection of stalking a lone roan bull in some bushes. It was a "Midsummer Night's Dream." He was there! Yet, when we got there, he was here; and, when we got here, he was elsewhere.

"It's like the darcy describing the perils of travel," I babbled to Lake in between times. "When yo' get in a railroad wreck—there yo' is. But when yo' get into a shipwreck—where is yo'?"

"I don't follow you," he complained.

"I don't blame you," I answered.

Then the roan, who had been standing in some bushes about ten feet away listening, uttered a

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throaty laugh and removed himself from the neighborhood. It was very underhanded of him.

That afternoon the sky was full of smoke from grass fires. The boys indicated that it meant Abyssinians, and made unpleasant slitting gestures in the vicinity of their Adam's-apples. However, it was the kind of screen through which an African sunset is seen at its best. Deep plutonic reds, mysterious and sinister, faded into a diaphanous primrose and the delicate pink of peach blossoms; in very truth, a land of surprising contrasts, where the roar of the lion as it stands over the bleeding carcass of its "kill" yields place at dawn to the liquid cooing of sucking doves. In the east, blandly draped in tints ineffably delicate, a new day is born to die in savage, sanguinary reds.

CHAPTER XIV

Lake chases wounded "tetel" in sun, without hat—comes back with May flies in his belfry. We spill blood in a miniature Paradise. Meet English lady traveling for health. Ali bites the clinical thermometer into four (4) pieces.

FOR two more days we lingered at Shems—a long time in this land of constant movement. In fact, our stay was regarded as a matter of such permanence the camel boys built us a three-sided hut of grass. Good boys they were—though dull and inarticulate.

One noon, as we sat at lunch panting with the heat, Abdu approached with the news that two "tetel" were at the water-hole two hundred yards away. "Tetel" are "kongoni" in Kenya Colony and hartebeest in zoologies, but in any language carve up into rather tempting steaks and chops. So, making a hole in the grass wall of our house,

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we were able to shoot at them, practically from the lunch table; and one went down as though stricken by a thunderbolt. Yet, when the boys rushed into the river bed to bring him in, he got up and vanished into the west.

This was too much for Lake, in spite of the fact that the sun's rays were vertical. Shoving a handful of ammunition into his pocket, and uttering a vulpine cry, he loped away in pursuit. For a few minutes I followed, but the heat of the sun was paralyzing. It suffocated one, like the belchings from the pit of a volcano. I pictured myself in a state of liquid dissolution, leaking silently away into the sand. One view of the picture was enough. I returned to the shelter of our grass hut.

Then I discovered that Lake, in the grip of the blood-lust, had forgotten his hat. It was the most idiotic thing a man could do in these regions, where the actinic rays are ever watching for a chance to drill into a man's brain-pan and transform him into an aesthetic dancer or pursuer of May flies.

At the end of half an hour I sent out a camel with a bag of water in the direction Lake had taken; at the end of an hour he staggered back

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across the burning sand of the river bed. Yet, stagger is hardly the word—it was rather a ghastly, lurching dance macabre. The “tetel” had evidently led him across the burnt ground, for he was as black as a wisp of crêpe. His eyes and mouth stood out of their sable background like those of some charcoal burner’s from the pages of “Grimm’s Fairy Tales.” As an artistic maniac’s conception of “brain-fever” he would have been awarded a gold medal in any of the great *salons* of Europe.

He collapsed on his cot.

“What time is it in Moscow?” he asked in an intense voice.

“I don’t know, I forgot to wind my watch,” I answered, throwing as much potassium bromide into my voice as I could.

“By gad, sir, she’ll never do it,” was the next gem that fell from his lips.

“Don’t be too sure,” I humored him. “Some of the things the younger set get away with would surprise you.”

“She had the softest mouth in Berkshire,” followed this.

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"Important, if true," I agreed. It was getting a bit thick for me.

Then he started to sing:

"Hey ho, hey ho,
The merry horn does blow,
'Tis broad day,
Come away.
Twivee, twivee, twivee, hey!"

"Look't here, Lake," I said sternly, "I don't care if you're cuckoo or not, this kind of thing has got to stop."

He seemed to gather himself together then.

"It's an English hunting song," this was voiced as a veiled apology. "I was dreaming of my English hunter."

Then he sat up, and pulling his cot up to the table started to eat minced oribi just where he'd left off an hour ago.

"I chased that four-legged centipede a hundred miles," he volunteered, as clear as a bell.

"Did you get him?" I asked, without attempting to conceal my relief.

"How could I? Every time I caught up to him

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he demobilized himself and didn't become reincarnated until he was a quarter of a mile away." Thereupon, Lake took a bath and went to bed.

This frightful exposure may have had something to do with subsequent happenings. Then again it may not. But the fact remains that he missed an Equatorial sunstroke by a matter of inches.

That night Lake sat up for leopard—a thing he had long yearned to do—but all he got was sand flies.

One other picture of Shems remains bitten into my memory.

We had made a long tedious journey over a sun-baked plain, and suddenly entering a patch of woods, burst into a veritable Garden of Eden. A quarter of a mile beyond the edge of the trees lay a shallow lake. A profusion of yellow, red and white flowers floated on its still surface. Its banks were virginal green. Long-legged water fowl stood in its shallows, as motionless as statues. They seemed sunk in dreamless meditation; and well they might have been, in such a silent Paradise.

There was a rustle in the bushes; a large roan stood looking at us. There was a reverberating

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report. The smell of cordite tainted the air. The roan fell dead. Then, in the midst of this heavenly spot, he was cut into red, raw pieces and slung onto the back of a camel.

The water fowl, after their first fright, settled once more into abstract contemplation. The yellow, red and white flowers floating on the surface of the glassy pool continued to lend an air of infinite peace and colorful gaiety to the scene. While we, being mere men, bent our jubilant steps toward camp, bearing our bloody cargo. Thus life had revolved for untold centuries on the Dinder River!

Now, Shems had become an old story, so daylight found us plodding south through the sand of the river-bed toward Khor Galegu; the one place—just around the corner, where anything might happen.

Suddenly, far in the distance, advancing slowly towards us a group of tiny objects appear! Abyssinians? Who? What? We pull up under the bank. A babel of queries and answers break out. We are held in the grip of a glorious excitement. Our rifles are loaded; the shot-gun delivered into the hands of Abdu. Mubarak and Nur are dealt

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out a rifle, and to prevent any feeling of favoritism Sherief is handed the "rook rifle" with more formality than the pop-gun deserves. With never a pause the specks approach; they take on form and shape. Camels, donkeys, men! Five camels and three donkeys! Nearer they come, and nearer. Then Lake, who is studying them through the glasses, suddenly exclaims: "Gad! It's nothing but a woman! It's that Mrs. Blake the Governor spoke of, or I'll eat my hat raw! For the love of Mike put away those cannons!"

The cannons are hastily concealed. Lake and I ride forward to meet the modern Diana. In the middle of the river-bed her caravan halts. We dismount from our donkeys, to face an English woman in search of a rest.

It was unnecessary for me to roll my eye in Lake's direction to know that his jaw had dropped. My own was hanging suspended in the breeze like the dewlap on a moose. Before us, on a jaded donkey, sat a woman not over five feet tall; her wrists were thin and frail; her cheeks, though tanned by the sun, were drawn. She was a picture of fragile effeminacy.

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Her five camels, drawn up in the sand behind us in charge of three camel boys, burred complainingly; bright-eyed, her two *shikaris* regarded us. She was dressed in the traditional felt hat known as the "double terai," a flannel shirt open at the throat, knickerbockers and golf stockings.

"We heard you were up here," I admitted. "In fact, we were half looking for you."

"Well, here I am in the flesh," she answered, which seemed to terminate that line of thought; the only thing to which one could possibly take exception being her reference to flesh, which was the one thing she hadn't brought with her.

"Did you see any Abyssinians?" asked Lake.

"I've had many troubles in my life, and most of them never happened," she quoted.— "If you get what I mean."

"I sort of gather there aren't any Abyssinians," answered Lake dully.

"What luck have you had?" I managed to expel from the lower regions of my pectoral cavity.

"Ripping," she replied.

"Great country, isn't it?" Lake shot out.

"Splendid for a rest, if you're feeling seedy,"

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she admitted, "though for excitement I prefer Uganda. Well, I must be pushing on. Oh! by the way, have you any .303 ammunition? I'm down to twenty-four cartridges."

With profuse apologies, we confessed to an utter lack of .303 ammunition.

"Bad luck!" she said. "That'll shorten my trip. Well, good hunting!" and the next thing we knew we were standing there looking at her back as her donkey shuffled down toward Shems.

"Don't it beat hell!" said Lake as we stood there, "how formal people keep, no matter if they're in the middle of the Sahara Desert. Here we are a hundred miles from the nearest white man. It seems as though we should have asked her to dinner or something."

"It's evident you've never heard of the three fatal international social errors," I told him. "Yes, it's quite evident you have not. Well, you're going to hear 'em now: 'Poverty in America, indigestion in Paris and familiarity in England.' Let's go!" And we went.

Galegu was a pretty camp, though I didn't notice it until afterward, for just as we approached

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it, my donkey's foot slipped into a crack and I fell on my face. Our camp was pitched under three large shady trees that must have seen many a strange tryst in their day, as they were the only trees of any consequence for many a mile; and a tryst for some reason always occurs under a tree. It's a tradition. As I have noted, it was a pretty camp; and I'll never forget that twenty-four hours at Galegu.

To begin with Ali got a touch of the sun. He couldn't function at lunch at all. He said his head was exploding. Lake suggested that it had burst long since and scattered its contents over the country-side. But this drew but a disappointing response from Ali.

"Don't chaff the lad," I rebuked Lake. "For all we know he may be coming down with a slight touch of leprosy or something. You wouldn't feel so spry yourself under the circumstances." Then I took his temperature, and he deliberately bit the thermometer into three pieces. I say there were three pieces, because that's all I got back, though I'll swear there was a fourth piece which the rascal

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ate. He seemed to labor under the impression I was trying to feed him some kind of confection.

Down by the water-hole, a quarter of a mile from camp, lay the largest "croc" we had seen yet, and for all the damage we inflicted on him he still remains the largest "croc." After having thoroughly decided this question, Lake drifted off on a hunt of his own, while I stalked an oribi a short distance away. Now, while I got the oribi with my second shot, I almost got Lake with my first, which went over the target and ricocheted over the burnt ground straight for Lake, who was calmly stalking a reed buck half a mile down the river. The bullet bounced from one hillock to another with fascinating abandon. Then, fortunately, just as it was about to pierce Lake's unsuspecting frame, it hit something and bounced clean over him; from that point forward I lost interest in it.

As I watched it skimming along, however, thirsting for a possible victim, I couldn't help wondering what would happen if it accidentally found its mark. We were nearly one hundred and twenty-five miles from the nearest white man, let alone doctor. A broken bone, a touch of dysentery

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or enteric, and a long ride lay ahead of us. But those things don't happen when one is on safari—that's the answer.

That evening the setting of the sun, and rising of the full moon were nearly simultaneous. It was a sight one doesn't readily forget, try as he will. In the west a grass fire threw up dense clouds of smoke, so both nocturnal orbs were especially glamorous. We sat at the water-hole, and idly watched the aerial cavortings of many birds. They were swallows in form—yet swallows in fancy dresses of brilliant red and green, with long tenuous tails.

CHAPTER XV

I

Charged by seventy (70) buffalo. Appetite for buffalo hunting destroyed. Arabs up a tree after honey nearly consumed by fire. Elephant-stalking by moonlight. Hysterics in the jungle.

WE were now about to peck at the very kernel of the Dinder River hunting country—for just to the east of us lay the Ras Amer; a vast series of shallow pools and marshy, flower-spangled lakes, which never dried up, though during the dry season the provocation was great. According to fable, it was a verdant region of lush grasses and succulent shoots. No wonder the game herds considered it their promised land—anybody would who fancied that kind of a diet. It was a glorified zoological subdivision.

Just as the lions ceased their nocturnal chorus

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and slunk off to their lairs to doze the day away, we threw some lunch aboard one of our ships of the desert and set out for the great swamps. Before we left I slipped a copy of Cooper's "Deerslayer" into my pocket to be used as a nepenthe in case of delays. We carried no other form of anesthetic.

These floating meadows were about eight miles off as the crow flies—but we rode our donkeys; so it was a good three hours before we turned them over to the nameless donkey boy and started to hunt around the shore of a great shallow lake.

Suddenly the *shikaris* halted, listening intently. Then they uttered the familiar word "gamus." Drifting down on the gentle breeze they'd caught the faint bleat of a cow buffalo. Their tympanums were as delicate as the most sensitive of microphones, for we had heard nothing but silence. There was plenty of that. Wild Bill was sent up a tree. As soon as he reached the upper branches he began to motion violently. They were over there—pointing; there were many, many of them—violent flexing of the digits; they were big past

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all belief—large sections of atmosphere carved up with the hands to indicate size.

This was to be no paltry skirmish, that was evident; for the boys were tying up all loose ends—clearing the decks, in a word—as though they looked for nippy work. Wild Bill took the lead. We entered some grass that reached far above our heads, and found ourselves knee-deep in water. There was a quarter of a mile of this kind of navigation. Then we climbed to higher ground. Bill parted the grass and pointed with evident pride to six large cows, about twenty yards away, busily engaged in keeping down the vegetation.

But, as is always the case, we wanted bigger and better buffalo, so crept closer and closer, dodging from one clump of grass to another. Then, a few yards in front of us, one appeared that looked distinctly healthy. It was Lake's turn. With no hesitation he raised his gun and fired. Like a log the buffalo dropped, uttering the faint bleat that usually indicates the end—the death rattle of the “gamus.”

Instantly, as though they sprouted from the

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earth, the neighborhood began to seethe with buffalo. Every bush, covert and bunch of grass seemed to belch one forth. As they appeared one after another they were actuated by but a single impulse—self-preservation. Ramping and snorting they converged on the body of their fallen comrade. It was the focal point which drew them like a magnet. In a few seconds there were seventy buffalo milling around, fifteen yards away. Speaking for myself, I was much too close to entirely too many “gamus.” I’m a firm believer in taking my dissipation in moderation. Now they began to snort—not anaemic, effeminate snorts, but snorts originating in pulmonary cavities the size of small caverns and forced through dilated nostrils by lungs of leather. As snorts, they were unmistakably authentic and virile. Next, a number of them began to regard us with blood-shot, vindictive eyes, while a dozen others stood around the stricken animal, nudging it with their moist noses.

What would have happened next I’m sure I don’t know, but the fallen animal created a welcome diversion. It began to show signs of return-

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ing life. It attempted to struggle to its feet, fell back to earth to try again. This time two huge bulls placed themselves on either side preventing its slipping to the ground. With a supreme effort, it stood once more on its four legs. Then, tightly wedged between its two comrades, it was hustled away to safety. With one final community snort the rest followed. I'd heard of numerous cases of co-operation among animals, but never anything just like this. Evidently the most sinister quadruped, in Africa—that asked for no quarter and gave none—observed the amenities of society in their noblest form.

With savage cries the *shikaris* urged us forward. Running as best we could we followed the herd, which made directly for a bare patch of ground unrelieved by even a spear of grass. Evidently the “gamus” had determined to carry the battle into the open.

As we reached the middle of the level arena of sunbaked clay, with paralyzing suddenness the herd turned and faced us. They seemed to be under the leadership of an ancient bull of fabulous proportions, who evidently had drilled them thor-

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oughly for just such an emergency. In an instant they had grouped themselves in a wedge-shaped formation. The old bull formed the apex, trailing away on either hand were the lesser bulls, while in the middle of the wedge huddled the cows and calves.

Seventy yards of sterility separated us. Lake, the four *shikaris* and myself stood rooted to the spot, fascinated by the unfolding drama. There was no possibility of escape. My only sensation was one of extreme disgust—disgust with myself for getting into such a mess. The wanton futility of it made me heart-sick. I could hear my children on diverse occasions when the question was pressed, remarking: “Oh, yes! We remember our father quite well. He was stepped on by some buffalo in the Sudan—Fung Province. Why, we’re not certain. It was a pleasure trip. They sent us the buttons off his ‘shorts’ to remember him by. That’s all they found. There was just one apiece.”

I could have bellowed with vexation. Three buttons! My concrete immortality would be presented by three second-hand BUTTONS! “Maybe they won’t even find them,” I chided myself.

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My mind was violently jerked back to the reality of the moment. The buffalo were slowly advancing, their noses to the ground. Great strings of foamy saliva hung from their muzzles; their blood-shot eyes were rolled back in their heads in a ghastly distortion. We looked out over a sea of horns.

Slowly they came—nearer and nearer, yet as grim and inevitable as Death with his scythe. We were ripe for the reaping. They raised their massive hooves deliberately; deliberately they sank them into the earth while the dust spurted. That moment when they caught our taint in the air, or some natural defensive instinct caused them to break into a wild charge, was the moment I hated to contemplate. Nothing could stop them then. Should one of us run for it, or make the slightest movement, the result would be equally disastrous.

Now they were only sixty yards distant—fifty—forty—thirty! I could see the river Styx distinctly. Charon was busy whittling out some new oarlocks. Vaguely I heard Mubarak's voice: "For Christ sake shoot!" he was hissing. "Strange," I thought. "He knows no English, and until

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a real emergency arose Allah was good enough for him. Now he wants the best he can get—what of it?" Convulsively I pulled both triggers of the Cordite rifle. There was an ear-shattering report. Lake began to shoot. Quicker than the eye could follow, the herd turned abruptly to the left and thundered past us in a vast column of dust.

We watched them cross the bare patch; they reached the clumps of grass, and then some dense bushes. Into these they plunged, flattening out tangled branches as though they were made of paper;—and, so they vanished leaving behind them a trail of devastation.

They were gone. It was unbelievable but true. A babel of voices broke out. We began to laugh—the Arabs, Lake and myself. It all seemed excruciatingly funny. We laughed and laughed again. The Ras Amer was filled with the staccato notes of our violent mirth.

Suddenly I became aware of an unpleasant sensation in the region of my legs. I looked down. They were covered with red ants the size of baby Zeppelins. Protruding from their jaws were long meat-tearing pinchers equipped with serrated

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edges to give them a better grip. We had been standing over an ant's nest. But so much had been concentrated into the last few moments this was the first I'd heard of it.

Ever on the alert, ant-scouts had spread the news below ground that lunch was being served on the terrace; followed a mad scramble for the first service. They had just finished the fish course and were pressing on to the entrée when they were rudely interrupted.

"A few more matinées with those buffalo," Lake remarked, as he danced about slapping ants, "and I'll have to go on a diet of tiger's milk to quiet my nerves."

"There's one thing we can never forget," I replied. "Those four *shikaris*, absolutely defenseless, stood there like rocks and never moved. If they'd started to run we'd be taking our first lesson on a harp instead of removing ants,—and don't forget that what the buffalo started the ants would have finished in an hour, provided the vultures let them. They are four brave men. Personally, I didn't run for two reasons; there was no



Nur, Wild Bill, Mubarak, Sherief. "If they had happened to run we'd be taking our first lesson on a harp."

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place to run, and for the moment my mind had severed all relations with my legs."

We sat in the shade of a tree. Lake and the boys stretched out luxuriously and dozed. Reaching into my pocket I fished out a small volume, rather moist and unattractive now, and started reading Cooper's "Deerslayer."

II

The boys soon tired of lolling and began to rummage about like a pack of beagles. Then Wild Bill began to bay.

"He's treed some honey," Lake remarked, as we followed the sound. "I'm getting so I can tell the call of the comb."

In the center of a dense patch of dry grass stood a lone tree, dead these many years. About fifty feet from the ground Nur and Sherief were giving the swarm an anesthetic in the form of pungent smoke from a wisp of inflammable material. This Nur proceeded to drop and, at once, the tinder-like grass surrounding the tree exploded with a roar like that of a predatory animal. The lower

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branches of their lofty perch began to snap and crackle; the trunk itself burst into flames.

"Unless those fellows are made of asbestos we'll have two roasted *shikaris* on our hands in a couple of minutes," yelled Lake.

Little darting tongues were reaching towards their feet; swirling clouds of smoke enveloped them. The honey began to melt and run down the tree trunk, a liquid mass of stickiness. For the next few seconds we became frenzied fire-fighters, scattering unburnt grass, whacking away at the roaring heart of the blaze, while from above Nur and Sherief watched our antics with considerable interest.

It was Mubarak who solved the difficulty with dramatic simplicity. He merely led the flames away to other less populated regions; persuading, coaxing and cajoling them on until at last they disappeared, in turn, just as the buffalo had, leaving a legacy of charred and smouldering desolation.

Strangely enough this whole proceeding struck us all as exceedingly humorous. Even the two men on the verge of a fiery immolation were much

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amused. It was evident our intellects were gradually merging into the primitive.

Late that afternoon we returned to camp, but not entirely empty-handed; for the boys captured an oribi fawn by running it down in an open glade. It was a beautiful little animal; perfect in form; delicate and fragile as a rose blossom. We took it to camp, warning the boys to give it good treatment. Yet somehow, during the night it was overtaken with a fatal accident, entirely unavoidable of course. The cooking pot did the rest. Nothing could be done about it, and as Lake remarked, "At home we ate spring lamb without a quiver." Yet there was something about the incident that made one feel like a cannibal.

Over a net-work of lion-tracks left from the night before we crossed the bed of the river to reach camp. Again that evening in the light of a glowing sunset Ali and Abdu engaged in further jocund knife-play. Ali, intent on repairing the wreckage of the lute, neglected his domestic duties. This drew the wrath of Abdu down on his head, and from his sleeve, in turn, the knife with the wriggly blade. There were no casualties—it was

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merely a sort of symbolical entertainment. The heat was beginning to affect all of us more or less.

As we sat down to dinner a fire sprang up across the river, and twinkled suspiciously in the gathering gloom. Who could have lit it? Abyssinians? There seemed no other explanation. The boys gathered around the table, buzzing with excitement. Once more the rifles were loaded. It seemed as though filling the bodies of Abyssinians with lead slugs was the most laudable ambition in the world. Then Nur appeared out of the darkness to explain that he had started the fire on the way back to camp.

As we stood thus in a tense group listening to Nur's explanation an elephant trumpeted at the water-hole a quarter of a mile away. Africa is rich in nocturnal cries, but no sound uttered by flesh and blood contains quite the same note of challenge as the trumpeting of an elephant in its own natural surroundings, especially when an Equatorial full moon has turned the world to silver, yet left it here and there filled with pools of deep tenebral shadows.

Within two minutes we were creeping across



The boys captured an oribi fawn.

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the moonlit sands with the four *shikaris*. Lake and I were dressed without affectation in frazzled pajamas and mosquito boots. What the others wore escapes me at the moment, but it was something informal. Yet, as things go on the Equator, our costumes were beyond reproach. Anyone with a sartorial complex may feel easy in the Dark Continent, as long as he can muster a stout pair of pajamas. They will see him through most any crisis.

We made across the river bed for a small islet covered with bush, just the other side of which lay the water-hole, so located that it was invisible from camp. We reached the inky shadow cast by its high bank, to be swallowed up in its funereal gloom. Slowly we crept along this tunnel of darkness. Terrific splashings and submarine upheavals were waking the echoes a couple of hundred yards away. We reached the end of the islet. Two steps more, and we would stand on the edge of the water-hole face to face with the largest African animal. Suddenly, the sounds ceased. The silence of death fell over our small world. Even the roaring of the lions was stilled for the

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moment. We had been winded. In the last patch of shadow we crouched under the bank awaiting eventualities; four Arabs and two white men. Far down the river small night animals went slinking over the sands in the brilliant moonlight. Still deathlike silence! It seemed as though hours were passing. A swarm of gnats gathered about us. We evidently filled a long felt want, for they sent out gnat messengers and rallied a couple of million more. The strain became almost unendurable.

Then Sherief got the giggles. Spasms of silent laughter racked his brown body, breaking at length into moist explosions and high falsetto titters. With the thumb and forefinger of one hand he held his nose, the palm of the other was pressed tightly over his mouth, but it availed not. He sounded as though someone had just released the cap of an overcharged bottle of soda. Since my school days, I've heard nothing more genuinely hysterical. For some reason it all seemed utterly side-splitting. Nur and Wild Bill began to shake like jelly. Then Lake and I threw up the sponge and joined them. White and brown alike, we responded to a common uncontrollable impulse. In convulsive

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spasms we rolled over and over on the sand. For thirty years I've never laughed harder—over nothing.

Lean old Mubarak alone failed to yield to the contagion of the moment. He stood the idiotic performance as long as he could, then reaching over slapped Sherief soundly, first on one cheek, then on the other. Like a drench of cold water, the act seemed to bring us all to our senses, and though we suffered several relapses we regained partial control.

The deathlike silence continued. We could picture the pachyderm standing like a bronze statue in the shallows of the pool, ears spread wide apart—listening—listening—while the full moon silvered his ancient ivory. It began to grow late. We couldn't crouch there all night in a nocturnal vigil. Maybe there was nothing there at all! At length we decided to leave the security of our shadow, and face reality.

Noiselessly we covered fifty feet of glittering white sand. The pool lay before us—empty. Now it was our turn to be surprised. Unless we were all in the clutches of a delirium, something was

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certainly lurking nearby—but where? The river bank stood far above our heads in the dense shadow of a patch of trees. Suddenly, from a few feet away, the stillness of the night was again shattered by the vibrant trumpeting of an elephant.

Somebody shoved a gun into my hands. The next thing my startled eyes beheld were five men in headlong flight over the sand toward our patch of shadow. It was ludicrous. They were giggling shrilly and tumbling head over heels, tripped by the clinging sand.

Now, there was a mighty stirring on the bank above my head. A couple of good-sized trees crashed to the ground violently. Without even taking a second look, I dropped the gun and followed my confrères. Before reaching the benevolent gloom of the shadow, I myself had managed to turn three complete somersaults, yet took no satisfaction in the accomplishment of an acrobatic feat totally beyond my powers under ordinary circumstances.

The elephants were in panicky flight from the sounds, as though an adolescent tornado was passing through our little forest. Trees were falling

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right and left; there were splintering crashes and booming reports, where a trunk was snapped clean off. The sounds of devastation grew fainter, to be finally swallowed up by distance. Once more silence settled down over the pool. Then, a short distance away, a lion roared. From far off, in the direction of the Ras Amer, another hurled back a rumbling retort.

Half an hour later we straggled into camp.

“For one day, I will tell this bug-eyed world, I’ve had enough,” said Lake, as we rolled into bed.

CHAPTER XVI

Eclipse of the moon near Abyssinia. Boys claim it is dead, but bring it back to life by chanting Koran. This and that.

YET it seemed as though I'd only snatched a moment of dreamless slumber, when I became conscious that my mosquito-bar was being violently agitated. It was the merciless Abdu:

"Elephants and lions are making bad business at the water-hole," he said.

"For all I care they can jump into it and pull the hole in after them," I suggested dully.

"But it is four-thirty already. The gentlemen will get up soon anyway," he persisted. "They are big, big 'tome,'" and the inflexion of his voice left no doubt of their bigness.

I wouldn't have believed it possible, and sometimes I don't believe it even yet, but an hour later

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we were plodding through that infernal sand again after elephants.

"I'm getting elephantiasis," complained Lake. "I figure I've hoofed one hundred and twenty-five miles after these peanut annihilators. I'm getting to hate the very name of them."

Only two things of any interest occurred during the next few hours. First, a lion a quarter of a mile away kept up his roaring for an hour after the sun rose, quite an unleonine proceeding, as they generally put on the muffler and steal home sometime before dawn. It was quite a temptation to leave our fresh elephant tracks and have a try at sleuthing him, but the grass was so high and plentiful it would have been but a cheerless game of hide and seek.

Secondly, we found it necessary to cross an arm of the water-hole full of muddy water and green scum. Great wealth would not have tempted me to put my foot into it, so the boys formed daisy chairs and proceeded to carry us over. As we approached the opposite bank, another wave of hysterics swept over us, which became so vociferous and debilitating that the daisy chairs disintegrated and we

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were let down into the mud. These excessive fits of mirth were beginning to pall a bit.

At ten A.M. we lunched and left Khor Galegu and the Ras Amer behind us. I'll probably never see them again, but by the moldering bones of St. Cuthbert I'll never forget them. As we ploughed our way through billowing waves of heat, we abruptly stumbled on a deserted camp. Five men had recently slept on the warm sand of the river bed. There was the imprint of their bodies as plain as day. They had slept in a ring, their feet pointing towards a tiny cooking-fire. In the bustle of their departure, one had cast away a worn-out sandal which lay by a piece of broken crockery—a symbol of primitive simplicity. There is always something dramatic about footprints in the sand, especially if there is a chance of their being made by rough hostile fellows devoid of hospitable instincts. Take the case of Robinson Crusoe, or Paul and Virginia—if they made any. And here were the perfect indentations of five human carcasses, surely enough for anyone's money. That they were Abyssinians there could be no doubt. Even now, they might be studying us intently from some nearby tuft of

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grass. But the thought failed to stir us. We had heard the cry of "wolf" too many times now to be even mildly interested.

"Before I can work up any enthusiasm over them," remarked Lake, "they've got to start popping at me or something. I've got troubles enough of my own."

And yet the boys were highly excited. They knelt in the sand and examined the imprints with the minutest care, chattering the while like magpies; and before Abdu would camp that day he insisted on Wild Bill's deploying and setting fire to the grass to clear the country-side of cover for lurking enemies.

"What's the difference," said Lake, "if you burn off the grass we can't get stalked, sure enough, but you couldn't advertise the fact of our whereabouts more successfully."

"For days they know where we are," replied Abdu mysteriously. "We must keep bright eyes open from now on."

"A fellow certainly don't get much chance to close 'em around here," complained Lake.

And he was even more literally correct than he

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suspected, for at six that evening the full moon rose in the east, an iridescent red ball filling the whole horizon with its vastness; as it rose in the sky, however, its apoplectic tints mellowed down to a healthy pink, which yielded in turn to the wan paleness proper to a dead world.

At half past six it went into a total eclipse. This in itself was an amazing spectacle, but its effect on the Arabs was even more amazing. On them it seemed to react like a powerful Oriental drug. Whatever thin veneer of civilization they ever possessed dissolved in an instant, leaving them in their natural state—primitive nomads for whom the sun, moon and stars had a mysterious fascination.

As though for mutual protection they now squatted in a ring, chanting some barbaric formula in rhythmical syncopated murmurs. Their eyes became fixed and glassy, their motions jerky, automatic. The monotonous droning of their own voices at length seemed to place them under an hypnotic spell. They began to warm up to their work. At intervals their chanting was punctuated by wild, energetic howls and yells.

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The moon began to reappear. The howling and yelling grew more intense. There was a note of wild triumph in the strident voices. Slowly it emerged from its shroud; again it floated in the deep blue sky, an effulgent globe of silver. Gradually the clamor died away; the tension relaxed, though now and again there was a solitary yell it seemed nothing more than the result of a natural exuberance of feelings.

There was no sleep for the boys that night. The remaining hours of darkness were devoted to a gluttonous orgy, staggering in its scope.

We called Abdu over.

“What was all the hubbub about?” enquired Lake.

With unconcealed pride Abdu answered: “The moon she dies—you see it yourself, dead. We pray from the Koran and bring it back to life”——

“Good man,” said Lake.

“—And now we make a little celebration,” continued Abdu.

“You deserve it,” Lake added.

And so the eclipse came and went.

The thing that impressed us most the next day

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was the heat. It was fifty-six degrees at five A.M. and one hundred and ten degrees in the shade at noon. Anything left in the sun either melted and disappeared down a crack in the earth, or became so hot one needed a pair of tongs to handle it. Little things like rifle-barrels or the hobnails in one's shoes grew exceedingly feverish.

We spent five hours making our rounds. Reed buck, ariel, roan and tiang were so thick it was embarrassing. And we had now reached that point in our zoological bookkeeping where most everything we shot cost five or ten dollars a head. The introduction of the dollar sign into big game hunting automatically removes much of the itch from one's trigger-finger. One is apt to select carefully, and ponder deeply, before committing an assassination. This is as it should be. Of course, many varieties of gazelle were free under our game license. These we used for the table—there was no cover charge so to speak. And then all vermin was unrestricted. Vermin in Africa are lion, leopard—in fact, all the cats and predatory animals. As Lake expressed it, —“it was a pretty healthy form of vermin.”

Half perishing with the heat we turned our

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streaming faces toward camp, while visions of bosky dells, damp mossy rocks and tinkling rivulets swam through our heads. Then, in a sequestered little nook, we stumbled on just such a place; a limpid little pool hidden under a high bank. Its bottom was covered with white sand; its water was cool and crystal clear; its banks were garnished with delicate green herbage. Surely it was the loveliest spot in Fung Province! But what inconsistency! Ten feet away you could fry an egg on the sand, if you felt like it and had an egg.

The Abyssinian border lay but thirty-five miles to the south. Soon the foothills of its high plateau would appear on the skyline; sentinels that would challenge any further advance. Then we'd go some place else. What did we care! Ours was the "wind's will." So, in the morning, we packed our battered belongings and made another move towards the south.

Again we found a pool rimmed with sleeping "croc"; again one sorely wounded managed to slip into the seething water. It had apparently lost control of its diving apparatus, for it tore about on the surface with the speed of a racing motor-

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boat. Its jaws would open, to close with a snap that awoke the echoes. At length, it managed a very awkward nose dive and anchored itself in the mud. Once more the boys entered the green water up to their necks, and searched for its scaly body with their bare feet.

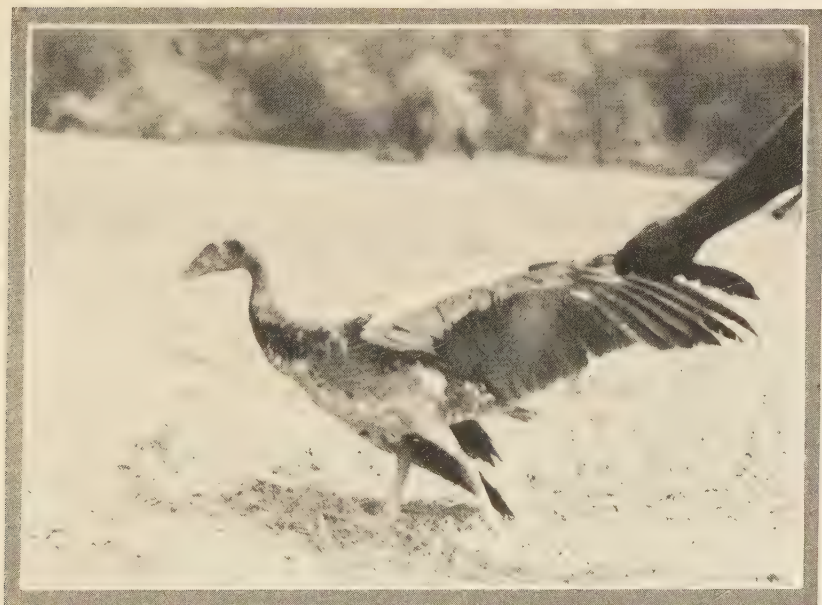
"It's enough to make your hair stand on end," I remarked, as we watched them.

"Well, all I can say is, you've got ambitious hair," Lake replied. "Mine's getting blasé. Besides, nobody ever gets gnawed." Which was true, and it was obviously a great waste of time to worry over those brown-skinned desert rats.

Just as we reached Semsir, our next camp, a good sized bird like a gull was floundering about in a shallow pool. Sherief caught it. One of its feet had become wedged in a piece of grass, which hobbled it as effectively as though it wore a ball and chain; for a blade of grass in Fung Province, as everyone knows, is eight or ten feet long and as thick as one's little finger. After giving it some good advice as to keeping its feet where they belonged in the future, we ordered Sherief to turn it loose. This he did, but not before he had bitten



Before Sherief would let it go he bit off the middle toe-nail from each foot.



Roast goose was not so insalubrious either.

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the middle toenail from each foot with considerable ceremony. Whether this little amputation would serve to bring Sherief an abundance of good luck, or what the motive was, we were never able to clearly determine. But we were left in no doubt that this bit of chiropody was a matter of dark and occult importance.

“What do you make of it?” I asked Lake.

“Some form of religious depravity,” he answered, “but as far as I’m concerned he can bite off as many bird’s toenails as he cares to. That’s how broad-minded I am.”

Then we camped under some big trees.

CHAPTER XVII

Meat riots. A tree with a tail. Night alarums. Leopard in the path. Filling up fish with pebbles.

AS we sat at lunch in the shade, a continuous procession of buck and gazelle crossed the sandy river bed a few hundred yards away. Evidently we were on a great game-trail leading from one favorite feeding ground to another—a “broad highway.” It was never free from four-footed pedestrians; some proceeding briskly, purposeful and businesslike; others drifted idly, lollards actuated by no other desire than to kill time. It was pleasant to sit in the shade and watch the variegated personalities of the hoofed and horned citizenry.

So pleasant it was, in truth, that before we were aware of it five days had passed—just slipped away from us while our backs were turned, to vanish into some limbo set apart for the storage of pleasant days.

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Of course, there were modest diversions and pleasant incidents; life really wove itself into a colorful tapestry, yet through it all pulsed a genial and profound peace.

We spent that afternoon playing about with a lone and ancient giraffe. Such a one makes a fine responsive playmate. His awkwardness and general imbecility lend a touch of the burlesque to the frolic. I'm afraid we teased this one, for when it finally dawned on him that someone was spoofing him a look of pained reproach stole into his liquid eyes, and he shambled away to regions where he would be more appreciated.

That evening at sunset we stalked three buffalo in the river-bed a quarter of a mile from camp, but nothing very terrible happened to stalker or stalkee.

In the morning we had the boys build us a house of grass. A couple of hours saw the completion of a very neat bungalow. It was open in front, with a roofed-over verandah and by special request the rear wall contained a door.

"Why?" queried Lake.

"It's a comfortable feeling," I told him, "to know that if some local monstrosity comes barging in

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through your front door you can slip out by the rear exit—or vice versa,” I added, for I could see that he was going to attempt to corner me.

That was a pleasant dwelling of grass and wattles at Shems, with all the comforts of home. There is a poem starting: “How dear to my heart are the ancestral dwellings of America.” Obviously, the writer had never been to Shems.

We brought in considerable meat the following morning; a buffalo, and several other brands of nourishment very well thought of by the Arabs. At noon, as we dozed in the shade, pandemonium broke out in the native quarter. It sounded as though four simultaneous homicides were being committed. We yelled for Abdu.

“What?” we asked him, indicating the storm center.

“There is bad hell among the boys,” he informed us. “This one wants the meat. That one wants the meat. The *shikaris* say ‘it is ours.’ Elhardi, the skinner, say ‘it is mine.’ The camel boy even say ‘no, it is the camel boy’s.’ I go crazy.”

“This time we can’t ‘leave it lay,’” said Lake. “What’ll we do?”



*Bungalow building at Semsir.
The start.*



Half an hour later.



*One hour later. Note door in each
end to permit circulation of
inquisitive animals.*

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“Order all the boys up in front of us,” I suggested. “‘This one,’ ‘that one,’ camel boys and shikaris. If they are creating a ‘bad hell’ it’s up to us to raise a worse one.”

With Abdu acting as First Marshal and Ivy Orator, they were drawn up in a line in front of our bungalow. The battle formation seemed naturally to fall into three divisions; four *shikaris*, five camel boys and the four servants. The donkey boy remained neutral, as tradition demands of donkey boys.

“Now,” we ordered Abdu, “explain this diabolical noise.”

Not a little impressed with the importance of his position Abdu proceeded to elucidate: “The *shikaris* say ‘we are hunters, all the meat goes to us.’ Elhardi say ‘I am the skinner, it goes to me. I take it to Khartoum and sell it for money.’ The camel boys say ‘we are camel boys’—Ali say ‘I am Ali’ and pulls out a long knife—Allah—Allah—ALLAH!”

“Tell them,” we instructed him, “there’s one very important thing they’ve overlooked—we are Pashas and if they don’t shut up they’ll all be fined a

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month's wages—imprisoned in a black hole and given the bastinado—boss”——

“What's the ‘boss’?” asked Lake.

“That means ‘the matter's ended,’ in Swahili,” I advised him.

“Why don't you try a little Eskimo on 'em if you have any,” he suggested.

“And beside all that,” I ordered Abdu, “tell 'em we're surprised at them—grown men—making such a fuss. They sound like a lot of women. You, Abdu, will divide all the meat in the future.”

Now Abdu delivered quite a stirring oration. From the sound of it, it must have contained a lot of Arabic theology, for every second word was “Allah!” Then they filed away, a sheepish-looking platoon with their figurative tails between their legs. And so ended the Battle of Semsir.

I don't know if I've mentioned it more than eight or nine times, but the sunsets in these regions are poignant. Such colors! Such fervid reds and fragile pinks! We sat through another this night. At length the light faded. The first lion roared. There was a peal of laughter from the boy's cook-fire. They had evidently buried

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the hatchet. Good! Once more all was quiet along the Dinder.

One day we had an engagement with a hundred and fifty buffalo on an open plain, stalking them on our stomachs snake-fashion. Then they took fright—which was quite a relief to me—and dashing pell-mell over a ten foot bank crossed the river and took the same hurdle on the opposite side. It was all worth the price of admission.

On the way home Sherief stopped and pointed to the trunk of a tree. There, one could hardly believe his eyes, but a long hairy tail seemed to be growing about ten feet from the ground. It was a gaily colored tail, rings of black alternating with orange—and the first I had ever seen growing from a tree. Now Sherief proceeded to climb, and reaching his hand into a hole drew forth an animal the size of a large house cat. Its body was spotted like a leopard's, its teeth and claws were needlelike. Sherief's hand and arm were bleeding unpleasantly, but he did not seem disturbed. We had captured our first genet.

Again, at one o'clock that night, Abdu and Ali rushed in with the news that elephant were mak-

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ing love to our camels, tethered a couple of hundred yards away, well to leeward. It could hardly be said to rate as news, for it was evident something was making advances to them, from the noise they made. We tumbled out with our heaviest weapons. Then Abdu and Ali rushed back. They had changed their diagnosis. It was buffalo. We changed our ammunition from hard-nosed to soft. Once more they stumbled up, and withdrawing all previous remarks, defined the intruders as hyena. Returning once more to our arsenal, we switched to light rifles.

"I'm damned if I'll move another step until they decide what it is," said Lake. "Next they'll be rushing back and telling us it's a mouse or a canary bird and to bring our fly-swatters."

They did seem to be working on the law of diminishing returns. However, hyena were the least they could make of it, and on hyena they stood firm. So we all lined up on the river bank while Lake and I let off a couple of rounds at some skulking shadows. Then we all went back to bed.

The following morning the sun was barely up before we had dropped a water buck in a swamp be-



There was a tail growing out of the tree.



Sherief reached in his hand and pulled out a genet.

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hind camp. Over an area of many acres the water stood ankle deep, and it must have been crawling with something pretty attractive in the food line, for hundreds of long-legged fowls like storks were wading about stabbing it with their yellow bills. We dragged the buck over to a muddy patch, that at least had the advantage of standing above water, and here the boys proceeded with the autopsy. It continued for nearly an hour, while I stood watching the storks. Suddenly there was a commotion under my feet, and a quarter-grown leopard jumping from the grass raced away for dear life. Of course, I didn't have my gun. It was where guns generally are in such cases, leaning up against the withers of the camel.

What a young leopard could find to amuse himself in the middle of a swamp was puzzling, until I looked at his hiding-place. Then it was easy to see that his purpose was entirely sporting. He had hollowed out a compartment in the grass, very much as a duck shooter constructs a blind. By sitting there with enough patience, one of the storks would be certain to wander by. The leopard would spring, and there'd be one less stork in the neigh-

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borhood. It was tedious hunting, no doubt, but at the moment I can't think of a better way to catch storks by hand.

Our life was congested with minor incidents. There was much plundering of honey trees. Yet one tree—a giant baobab—that stood nearby was left severely alone. Its trunk was about fifty feet in circumference; its hollow places one vast congeries of swarming bees. There were millions of them, all actively engaged on their hymenopterous affairs. Honey leaked from every crack of the community hive, yet no experienced honey-man would think of assaulting that bastille. You can't drug an army except by witchcraft.

At length two camel boys could resist the temptation no longer. When discovered they were half unconscious; stung in so many places you couldn't tell their heads from their feet. As honey boys, they rated one hundred percent unsuccessful.

Directly in front of our château lay a long narrow water-hole. Each evening at sunset there arose from its surface moist snapping noises, quite surprising and mysterious, until one discovered that they were made by dense shoals of fish in appear-



Its body was spotted, its teeth and claws needle-like.

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ance something like armor-plated bullheads. This was the hour they chose to nourish their bodies, and it was spent in pursuit of small silvery minnows. The minnows very naturally fled hither and thither on the surface of the pool, so the bullheads merely lay with their heads out of water and ugly mouths open. By snapping their jaws together at intervals they managed to pick up a living. It was diverting to sit on the bank, as evening fell, and cast an occasional handful of small pebbles into the pool. With a little practice one could create a very fair illusion of minnows. It seemed to baffle the bullheads, at any rate, for the pebbles were snapped up as greedily as live bait. Before I left I'd filled them so full of gravel their buoyancy was noticeably not what it used to be. They must have felt as though they were full of stalactites. Invariably a large ring of marabu storks assembled to watch, with the utmost gravity, this mild entertainment.

On our last night at Semsir, Lake determined to construct a gun-trap, but the *shikaris* would have none of it. "The Abyssinians will steal the gun, and kill us all," they argued, and nothing could

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convince them otherwise. So Lake set out with a rifle and ball of string, to build it alone. Fastening the gun in position was easy, but when it came to running the string from the trigger to the complicated arrangement of sticks that pulled it, he got in over his head. For a quarter of a mile in all directions the Dinder River was covered with string like a spider's web. Like the spider, Lake exuded more and more of it over the landscape. Then he ran out of string, and came home.

It was just after this we discovered that five days had unaccountably slipped away from us, creating a shortage in our accounts with the calendar, so that night we watched the sun set at Semsir for the last time.

CHAPTER XVIII

*Maiden meditations. Hoydenish experiences. Vultures.
Abyssinian hills. Fear. Nocturnal honey-hunters. Ali
steps in ant's nest.*

WE had now reached the apogee of the game country. Animals scampered all over the place. One could not move a step without a battery of eyes fixing him with an intent stare. As a rule the first expression in these eyes was amazement, which generally altered to curiosity and then sometimes fear, but not always. As a rule there would be some acrobatic cavortings and a half-hearted flight, the motive for which seemed to be forgotten after a hundred yards or so.

One had no privacy. It almost got on the nerves. To perform a toilet, no matter how refined, with a half dozen dog-faced baboons sitting around watching every move, with sort of a sad expression, is apt to produce self-consciousness, if not a down-

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right feeling of inferiority; especially if one or two find employment removing insects from the pelts of their young in a very suggestive manner.

It was a strange life, yet at times one felt he had been leading it vicariously for countless generations. At times one felt all kinds of things. For days and days we had not seen a cloud in the sky even as big as a pocket handkerchief, nor a mound of earth, nor even a rock the size of a billiard-ball. The world was flat and parched, the sky a void, the heat unmitigated. The only colors that relieved our eyes were produced by the prismatic sunrises and sunsets. Again, the moon and stars, those scintillating nights, were restful. Living in the open, with rarely a roof over our heads, we became, in a sense, star-gazers. There was little else with which to occupy ourselves, and it was easy to sympathize with the wandering people of old for making such friends of the celestial bodies. Aside from our own brief and sporadic conversations, the only language we heard was Arabic, and while we had a dozen or so of its elementary words the Arabs showed no desire to absorb any English, so conversationally we did not scintillate. Yet we seemed to



Something like armor-plated bull-heads.

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understand one another, doubtless through some vague form of mental telepathy.

The life had drugged us. We were under the spell of the lotus. At times we wondered what was going on in Paris; who was Premier of England or Peggy Joyce's latest husband, but in a singularly detached way. Such matters could have no possible connection with Um Urug, twenty-five miles from the Abyssinian border, where we were presently pitching camp.

As we ate lunch that noon it was one hundred and twenty-four degrees in the shade. We had cold consomme, snipe, oribi hash, stewed fruit and coffee, and decided to have Abdu take the shot-gun and get us a goose for the next day. Those were the things that counted. There were elephant about, a herd of a couple of hundred buffalo, lion, leopard and so many ruminants one had to insult them to clear them out of the way.

Late in the afternoon we set out on a ramble. Just around the corner from camp, we looked into a beautiful little glade in which five hundred head of game were taking a light lunch. It seemed almost like a cafeteria. Evidently something very tasty

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grew there, for customers flocked in. There was "standing room only." Then we made a noise, and watched them stream away like a desert sand-storm.

In the next glade I shot a water buck, after thinking the matter over carefully. He went down, but the next instant seemed to get up again, so again I knocked him down. Then, as if this wasn't enough, he jumped to his feet a third time. We were getting disgusted now, so went over to see what it was all about. The answer was simple—almost too simple. One buck had been standing, two others lying in the grass. When one fell, another got up, and so on. I'd been killing a different one each time, and the thought of posting up the game ledger that night made me shudder. But, as we were examining one, the other came to, and crawling away through the grass like a snake, while we weren't looking, made off without leaving a trace, which simplified the bookkeeping considerably.

It was an afternoon of many annoyances. Guinea fowl and reed buck persisted in interfering

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with everything we did. Finally we got mad and went home.

Most everyone on a hunting trip has at least one experience that's hoydenish from start to finish, and makes him see red whenever he thinks of it. If you're especially gifted that way you can manage to crowd several hoydenish moments into even a brief outing.

The following day we stalked some tora very adroitly; and I wanted a tora, for I didn't have one. In fact, I don't think there's ever been a tora in our family. Just as we were about to sink one, I tripped over my own foot and they went away, but not with any air of finality. They seemed puzzled, and after trotting a few hundred yards would stop and look back. Picking out the best one I followed; running, then taking a shot, and running some more. Without going into harrowing details, at the end of that marathon, though the animal lay dead, I had fired thirteen shots and hit him eight times. I was in the middle of a vast plain that looked the same in all directions, and there was not a single human being in sight. Not that I was lost, I knew I was somewhere in Fung Province, of

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course, and the Belgian Congo lay to the southwest, while Arabia was off to the east, but I had an intuitive feeling it was a long way to Um Urug where we happened to be stopping at the moment. Then I looked down at my prize, and found he had a crumpled horn. As a trophy, he was about as useful as a two-headed calf. He was a freak—he wasn't a specimen. In the heat of the battle I'd fired all my ammunition off, too. A lion could come right up and laugh in my face, and all I was prepared to do was laugh back.

I sat down on the freak and waited. The *shikaris* would show up sooner or later, they weren't going to lose one of their meal tickets; but it was one of the most uninteresting waits I've ever had. There was not a solitary living thing in sight. In half an hour a moving object appeared on the sky line. It was a boy on a camel. In another half hour I was squeezing the water bag, and telling Lake what I thought of the Sudan.

It was too far to carry much of the meat home, so we dissected the head and left the rest. We hadn't moved away fifty feet before there was the sound of rushing wings behind us. The air was



Tora with crumpled horn.



The vulture.



*Twelve minutes after the
vultures started.*

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full of vultures; the ground covered with them. In the high reaches of the blue sky, where they were invisible, they had been watching my antics with a hopeful eye. Their experience persuaded them that men, destruction and a filthy banquet generally went hand in hand, and they weren't disappointed. As soon as our backs were turned, they dropped like plummets onto the carcass and indulged in an obscene orgy. For the second time in Africa I held a watch on these feathered harpies. In twelve minutes nothing was left of the tora with the crumpled horn but a handful of ribs already beginning to bleach in the fiery vertical rays of the sun. Africa certainly has its moments!

At daylight we were up and away, keeping a sharp lookout for anything in the shape of Abyssinians. I think by this time we would have taken a pop at any object capable of moving in a horizontal position which had arms and legs. It was lucky that it had never been found necessary to send out a messenger to us. His reward for traveling a hundred and fifty miles over the cracked earth would surely have been about two pounds of lead well placed in vital spots.

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It was a pleasant jaunt to Hegeirat and without incident, except when a lone buffalo charged through the caravan. The camels, buffalo and a troupe of baboons got so snarled up together it took some time to sort them out, but no harm was done. It might almost be said we all enjoyed the break in the monotony.

Now the first rocks we had seen for weeks loomed up in the river-bed. They were curious looking things, and we stood gazing at them for some time. They reared themselves next to our camp like the tower of a cathedral. In France it probably wouldn't have been considered much of a spire, but one's ideas of dimensions alter in a desert. The conception of vertical lines gradually fades from the mind.

And then, looming ever so faint and blue in the distance, we saw the foothills of Abyssinia. There they were at last! For weeks they had lured us on. Why, it would be difficult to say. There was no particular reason that we should have fallen under their spell, but we had, and found it as compelling as though we were in the grip of an en-

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chantment. They were indefinably remote, savage, enticing.

“It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora,”

I quoted as we stood looking at them.

“I say!” exclaimed Lake. “It’s hardly necessary to do a thing like that.”

“After that: ‘Hey ho, hey ho—twivee, twivee, twivee, hey!’ effort of yours,” I reminded him, “I feel released from all responsibility.”

That afternoon we had our last brush with buffalo; forty of them, standing in the river-bed to catch the breeze that generally blew up it towards the south as though through a funnel. Also, it was flat and sandy and insured them against unwelcome intrusions. They stood in a compact group, cows, calves and young bulls heading into the breeze, while an old patriarch a hundred yards away thrust his moist experienced nose high in the air, testing every zephyr. He was First Exalted Husband, Secretary of War and Zephyr Tester of the herd.

From the cradle to the grave every moment of

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their lives is tinged with fear. They feed upwind, several crafty bulls acting as sentries; they sleep fitfully, prepared to thunder away at an instant's notice; they regard every taint in the air or unfamiliar object with suspicion; they never know a moment's peace. Yet, aside from man, no animal, with the possible exception of a lion afflicted with exaggerated ego, will attack them. Of course, where the calves are concerned it's different, and there's the rub. Their offspring are an unending source of worry to them, for several of the night prowlers possess a decided weakness for veal. Fear! Afraid of the dark! Afraid of the daylight! Afraid of everything! What a life!

For some time we watched the herd in its neurasthenic struggle for a brief siesta. Then the sun sparkled on one of the rifle barrels. There was a warning bellow, and away they went scrambling up the steep bank and vanishing into the setting sun. Secretly I'm glad no blood was let, for when all's said and done the head of a buffalo presents a far more thrilling spectacle mounted on a living carcass than it does over a mantelpiece.

The night that followed was noisy. The curtain

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raiser that ushered it in was a bedroom farce. Ali was the protagonist. In serving dinner he started to carry each course from the cook-fire to the table in the dark, as he always did. We sat on the edge of our beds prepared to eat. In the middle of his first trip he shot the soup into the air and began to howl like a wolf.

"Something's got him sure this time," said Lake, as we rushed over with a lamp.

It had. Ali stood in the middle of an ant's nest doing the Charleston. Some of his steps were positively lewd. His language was mordant.

"He's Scotch-Irish all right," said Lake, after listening to it a moment.

"He's big damn fool," corrected Abdu. During all these weeks of close intimacy he'd never altered his original opinion.

"What'd you want to do a thing like that for, you know so much about bugs?" was my query. Millions of ants were pouring out of the ground, sharpening their pincers on the way. These organized an overflow meeting on the ground sheet. The rest of the evening was spent in playing checkers with this well-worn patch of canvas.

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When coffee was finally served it was eleven o'clock.

The balance of the night was spent by the boys honey-hunting. We had apparently reached the edge of the honey-belt, and the boys were anxious to lay in a stock before the country went dry. Their system was simple. When they found a honey tree they chopped it down—and, as for honey trees around Hegeirat, they were more frequent than depositories in Lower New York. There was a branch bank on every corner, so to speak. 'Til dawn appeared in the East, the forest monarchs crashed on every hand.

“‘For he on honey-dew hath fed,

And drunk the milk of Paradise,’” I quoted from my favorite author once during the night.

“Cheese it, can't you?” Lake muttered, and fell off to sleep again.

In keeping track of time the boys used their imaginations, instead of wrist-watches. Apparently Ali forgot to wind his that evening, for he called us at four A.M. instead of five. Though revolting murders have been committed over less, he went unscathed. We were awake anyway.



*Some of those
Dinder River
camps were worth
remembering.*



*El Gabein was our last camp. The ground sheet was spread on
the sand bosom of the river.*

CHAPTER XIX

*Last camp on Dinder. First cloud. Our "skinner" proves a
"dud." A frontier fort. The camels drink. Across to
Rosaries. Smallpox, spinal meningitis and leprosy.
Lake falls ill.*

EL GABEIN was our last camp on Dinder River. We wandered up there next day, and spread our ground sheet on its sandy bosom, under a big tree. Such vagrant breezes as blew always seemed to follow its winding contour southward, and our chief aim in life now consisted in placing our persons in their path.

At noon it was one hundred and thirty-two degrees in the sun, while long after the stars were out the tube of glass continued to record one hundred degrees. It was here that the faithful thermometer began to show signs of extreme fatigue, and though it's a sad subject to dwell on we laid it to rest at El Gabein. Its end was touching.

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From a condition of super-heated feverishness, its temperature rapidly sank toward the Arctic regions. Something had to give. It did. The small glass bulb, and onto the sands flowed its life's blood. Its mercurial career was over. We were much cooler from now on.

We lay on our cots looking up at a flock of round fleecy cloudlets chasing each other across the sky like a flock of sheep. It was so long since we'd seen a cloudlet, let alone a mature cloud, that simply watching them was a pleasant form of dissipation.

"This is an inconsistent place," said Lake. "A hundred miles from here the boys see an Abyssinian behind every bush. Now, twenty miles from the border, they go crashing around through the woods all night as though there wasn't one within a hundred miles."

"Yes," I agreed, "and here we are sleeping under a ten foot bank covered with bushes. Anything inclined that way could make our beds in one jump. The idea of Abyssinians don't bother me as much as leopards. They say it's almost impossible to sleep with a leopard in your bed."

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"I should worry," answered Lake, and taking his gun strolled over to the water-hole.

Lying there I watched him make a long intricate stalk on a "croc," to decide at the last minute it was only a log and get up in disgust; following which the log in reality proved to be a "croc" and slipped into the water.

That evening Elhardi, the skinner, was revealed in his true colors. Lake had brought a number of metal disks numbered in duplicate. Elhardi's function was to prepare the specimen and attach one to the skull and one to the mask so they could be reassembled. Now, Lake discovered that Elhardi had mixed the tags. The whole thing was a chaotic mess. Tag number one was on a tora skull; its counterpart on the scalp of a reed buck. Any taxidermist attempting to mount those heads would have thought he was suffering from malignant delirium tremens.

Lake began to get madder and madder. Then he'd pause with a sardonic laugh, beat his head and get mad all over again.

"And he called himself a skinner," he shouted. "He couldn't skin a banana! He couldn't remove

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the wrapper from a limburger cheese, and get it back where it belonged in an hour. He'd think it came off a box of carnations! I'll fine him a year's wages—if I don't kill him first! I'll—." Then the heat began to get him, and he came over and lay down. I left him alone.

Directly behind this camp lay the framework of a giraffe recently killed by a lion, but beyond lending an added touch of melancholy to the scene the remains do not play an active part in this chronicle.

The next morning we were at Fort Romala. The Abyssinian hills were now so close we could almost reach out and touch them. Here, we would turn West and plod over sixty miles of barren monotony to Rosaries on the Blue Nile. The vast multitudes of game had vanished. Only a handful of gray monkeys sat on a pile of rocks in the sun eyeing us with lack-luster eyes. It all seemed utterly lonely and deserted. Even the mud fort was deserted, as was the pool that glistened in the sun at our feet. A feeling of depression swept over us—an undefinable regret. We were about to leave the Dinder River. It was too bad.



The fort at Romala was surrounded by a high crenellated wall—yet one felt if he breathed on it very hard the results would be disastrous.

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The living-quarters of the dozen men that occasionally occupied the post were surrounded by a high crenellated mud wall, very professional in design, if loop-holes, embrasures, barbicans, salients, ravelins, hornworks and demilunes mean anything—which I doubt. It may have been impregnable on paper, yet one felt if he breathed on it very hard the results would be disastrous.

We caught a small fish in the pool and had it for lunch, but as Lake remarked: "It had more bones in it than an old-fashioned pair of corsets."

"I'm not sure it isn't a pair," I told him. "It's a scandal the way picnickers are always throwing things about."

The ships of the desert were filled up with water ballast, for we were going across a dry country. It was the first opportunity I'd had to see a camel drink. One would naturally think a beast that hadn't had water for five days would show a mild interest in liquid refreshment, if it didn't utter a whinny and dive head-first into the drink, but not so a camel. First, they have to be coaxed like an amateur parlor entertainer to get them down to

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the water. Once there, they don't seem entirely clear as to:

(1) Just what's expected of them.

(2) What that funny stuff is that looks like water.

(A) It may be only the illusion of water.

(B) Or it might be something very unpleasant disguised as water.

So they stand there and waggle their heads and make goggly eyes. Then the camel boy splashes the water with his hand, and sings in a high minor key a wild barbaric ditty evidently dealing with the philosophy of reality and concreteness of water. Having been through the same performance every time they took a drink for the last thirty years, they at once connect the ditty with the water, and the water with the ditty, and proceed to gargle.

In like manner the donkeys were treated. Nobody ever sang to me in this connection.

The next three days were as one. We plodded over sixty miles of cracks, with nothing to break the monotony save when our donkeys tripped and dashed us to the ground. In my case this hap-



It's hard to get a caved to listen to reason. You'd think he might be a little interested in liquid refreshment after five days of drought. But before he will drink he has to be sung to.

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pened once every mile. That's how I know it was sixty miles to Rosaries!

Our *fantassas* and *girbas* had been filled at Romala. But by the end of the first day, the *girbas* were empty, and at the end of the second someone had absconded with the water from the *fantassas*, so for the rest of the journey we were not bibulous; for the entire journey our washing was purely metaphorical.

Half way across, at the foot of a huge dome-like rock, we passed through Maganu, a miserable little village that may have seen better days, but not recently. Even its water-hole was going dry and caking with mud, yet it was the first gathering of huts and human beings we had seen since Beida, weeks before. From a distance it looked quite dashing. The chief was just about to move it bodily to a less interrupted water-supply, and one and all, from goats to house fraus, were in favor of the motion. When the rains set in, he'd move it back and lie awake nights wondering if the levee was going to hold.

Deputy Governor King of Rosaries had been there only the day before. There was a note from

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him advising us about the road, and mentioning the fact that a messenger had been sent to meet us at Hegeirat to inquire after our health. It looked now as though they'd have to send a second messenger to find the first one, for he never reached us. Another, the Governor continued, was on the look-out for us just North of Romala. He, too, had existed only in the spirit. Both of them had probably abandoned the messenger business and collaborated in a honey-hunt. But it was flattering to know we were being watched over so attentively.

Further on, at a place called Gerri, we passed eighteen soldiers and a sergeant en route to Fort Romala to pass the winter solstice patrolling the game-herds. They were "Smoky Mokes," but smart. Through their kindness another letter from King reached us inquiring after our health and giving us road advice.

At Gerri Well we stopped for a drink of water. That sounds childish, but it was a matter of great importance. The well was full of wasps; it was one large subterranean vespiary. Up to this moment nothing had ever occurred in my life to trans-

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form me into a "vespiphile." But that drink of water did, and now I find myself very anti-wasp.

That evening we dined on soup, eggs, potatoes, creamed onions, Irish stew, French pancakes and coffee. I speak of this merely because Abdu advised us the food was giving out, and it paints a vivid picture of how men starve behind the beyond.

At noon the next day we entered Rosaries, the Omaha of the Border. There were barracks, the Governor's house, school, church, native hospital, several streets and a large market square, where in small stalls a complete cycle of the arts was carried on—from wood turning, where the operator held the chisel against the revolving object with his great toe, to sewing-machines that knocked out a suit of native clothes in three minutes. But the thing that impressed me most was the fact that some soldiers were languidly stringing barbed wire entanglements around the Governor's house.

We called on King at once, and thanked him for inquiring about our health so often. "Don't mention it," he said, and ordered an *askari* to take us to our lodgings in a large brick building on the

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edge of the town. It was palatial. There were six rooms in it. A few years ago the slave trade in this region had constituted its chief industry. Humans were run into Abyssinia on the hoof in such volume it was beginning to drain the local population. The birth rate couldn't keep up with the demand. For some reason the English weren't in sympathy with the traffic. A Commissioner, with soldiers, was sent to Rosaries. It was his house we were to live in.

The Governor sent us some oranges and bananas—which I suggested we turn over to the alleged skinner—and an invitation to go fishing after lunch. It seemed like an anti-climax. Go fishing! When we should be out looking for buffalo.

King was a slim, genial man of forty, with such a long tropical record that the sight of a piece of ice in a glass would throw him into an ague.

That was a pleasant afternoon on the clear waters of the Blue Nile; relaxing and soothing after the days of heat and dust. But ever and anon my thoughts ran back to the Dinder, its water-holes and stretches of sandy barrenness, its feathered and hoofed citizens; and for some reason it made



I know it was 60 miles across to Rosaries—because once every mile my donkey slipped his foot into a crack and threw me off.



At Maganu the Sheik was just about to move the village. His water supply was turning to mud.

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me feel homesick. It seemed as though it was our river now.

King dined with us. Abdu was at his best. It was all most enjoyable. We sat there in the dusk and conversed of many things, but chiefly of the country, its game and struggling, poverty-stricken inhabitants.

"I've had jolly hard luck with my natives this year," King remarked, as he toyed with a savory of anchovied eggs. "Lost nearly three hundred of 'em. A lot where you just came through."

"What from?" we enquired; not that it concerned us particularly. It was sheer politeness.

"Small-pox, spinal meningitis and leprosy," he replied.

Just then some kind of an animal that had strayed into the house—doors and windows were conspicuous by their absence—started tearing about the various dark rooms as though in the clutches of a fit. As it bumped into various articles they crashed to the floor, sending the echoes through the deserted rooms. We sat with our forks poised in mid-air looking at each other. At length it entered the room in which we sat, through

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the door, made three laps around it so fast it looked like a boa constrictor, ran between King's legs and vanished into the night in one wild leap through the window. "Hello—hello—hello! What in the world are you?" he queried, with the broadest of English accents. For a moment he gazed beneath him at that point in space through which the animal had just passed. Then he resumed his dinner.

The matter was not referred to further, nor was the subject of the epidemic diseases of the natives. It had only been touched on in passing as a matter of casual interest.

The next morning Lake was sick, and when I say sick I don't mean just unwell. He appeared to be on the verge of dissolution.

CHAPTER XX

Touching on dysentery. Elephant at last.

WELL, which one is it—smallpox, spinal meningitis or leprosy?" I wondered, as I looked down at Lake thrashing around on his cot. "There's not much choice." Then Ali was sent for the Assyrian doctor on the run.

He was a brisk, efficient fellow, and the only bright spot in the whole affair was the fact Lake had waited until there was a doctor in the house before crashing.

After going through all the motions that could be expected of a doctor, even in New York, he gave a short laugh:

"It's his spleen," he said, and shot the equivalent of twenty grains of quinine into Lake by the intra-veinal route.

"Good boy, Lake," I exclaimed with enthusiasm.

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"It's only your jolly old spleen—silliest organ in the human body. We'll sit on that in no time."

Two hours later Dr. Sassu returned, and again went the devious rounds of Lake's framework.

"Looks like a touch of malaria now," he remarked cheerfully, and poured an inky drench down Lake's unresisting throat.

"Bully for you, Lake," I attempted to console him. "You've recovered from the spleen attack already. It's nothing but a touch of malaria now. We'll be hunting elephants at Deisa tomorrow."

"What do you think this is—a game of progressive illness?" he answered weakly.

That afternoon the Doc returned. "Fine," he exclaimed, after the usual delving. "The matter has resolved itself. It is dysentery—amoebic dysentery."

"Well, for Heaven's sake! decide what it is while I've still got strength enough to get a little enjoyment out of it," said Lake faintly.

"That's final," replied Sassu.

"That's perfectly ripping," murmured Lake, and turned his face to the wall.

I dined alone that night. A quarter of a mile

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away the big drums were throbbing to the accompaniment of a babble of yells. At intervals these were punctuated by the shrill cries of a group of women. Then the men would chant in chorus. In the sky the faithful old dipper was upside down, and just above us twinkled the Southern Cross. It was a perfect setting for an attack of dysentery. Lake lay awake all that night, getting weaker and weaker. Few things can give a greater feeling of impotence than watching a strong man fade away before your eyes, thirty miles from the Abyssinian border. It was ghastly.

King was a very Gibraltar of kindly strength. The next day he talked me out of some dread tropical disease, for after watching Lake so closely for twenty-four hours I began to discover all kinds of unfamiliar symptoms of my own. From head to foot I was a mosaic of symptoms. When I spoke of them to King he laughed and gave me a whiskey and soda. Then I remembered some more, and he gave me another. Before I ran out of symptoms he ran out of soda, and I was cured. It only goes to show the marvelous control of the mind over the body.

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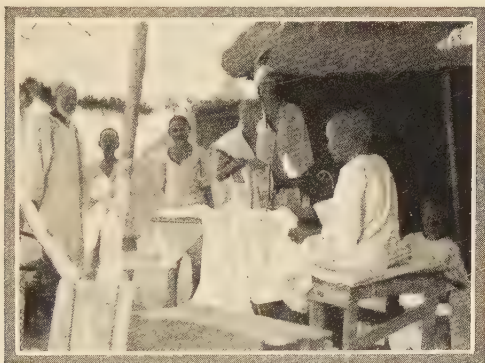
Over the single strand of wire connecting Rosaries with Singa, King sent a message enquiring if anyone could be found with a motor car and enough energy to drive it over the camel track—one hundred and twenty miles—and carry Lake down to civilization. This was Friday. In no time the reply came. A car—with a mirth provoking name—would come Monday. Tuesday evening we would sleep in Singa. Somehow, Abdu would have to bring the *hamla* after us. The only problem now was to keep enough strength in Lake to make the journey possible.

This was the duty of Sassu. He fulfilled it by whipping out a villainous hypodermic every hour, and stabbing Lake. He said it was some stuff called emetine, and that he was giving increasing and decreasing doses. Lake said: "If you don't lay off those bayonet charges there will be consequences." King said: "We'll move Lake over to my house in the morning"; so everything seemed to be coming out all right.

King added: "Furthermore, I suggest you take your *hamla* and hunt for kudu at Kerori and ele-



*"From Factory to Family."
Weaving—Rosaries.*



A suit in three minutes.



*Wood turning by the touch and feel
system.*

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phant at Deisa. Then go on to Haroun. Lake and the auto can pick you up there." He had seen what I could produce in the way of symptoms, when properly stimulated, and evidently felt the best tonic for me was action.

That night Lake was again restless and wakeful. The house was suffocating; it reverberated with strange noises. Just before dawn another animal entered, and did a wild dash about the premises knocking things right and left. In the course of its career of frightfulness, it upset the table on which Lake's watch lay, transforming a ticking heirloom into a silent museum-piece. The next morning, as we shifted Lake to King's house, the watch fell from his pocket onto a stone. At once it started running, just where it left off, and as far as I know is running yet. This was a good omen—if you care for omens.

King was the soul of hospitality, insisting on turning out of his own room for Lake's benefit. It was palatial, dark and cool and restful. At least it seemed so to us.

"I feel jolly weary myself today," he greeted me. "There's been too much talk about symp-

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toms around here. Next thing you know we'll all be down with the bally malaria. Let's go to lunch."

After a light repast of cold soup, minced meat and cabbage, cold ox hump, potatoes, tomatoes, custard, stewed fruit and coffee, I began to feel "jolly weary" myself, if not downright logy.

Sassu made a final survey and spoke in glowing terms of pulse, temperature and general response to treatment. So, bidding good-bye to Lake and King, I mounted my dejected donkey and headed north with my eleven Arabs.

We followed a worn and beaten track along the east bank of the Blue Nile. A continuous procession of natives passed us, bound for Rosaries, and relaxation. Most of them carried villainous looking spears, and employed as a means of locomotion whatever lay within their means; donkeys, camels or their own case-hardened feet. We passed a dozen black *askaris*, well powdered by a film of dust, Rosaries bound. They had walked from Wad Medani, two hundred and fifty miles away.

Through a haze of smoke the sun set a wicked

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red, throwing into high relief the palms on the opposite side of the river. Then, an hour after dark, we stumbled through a small grass village, and found a rest house. Each of the beehive huts we passed was filled with the ruddy glow of a cooking fire, around which clustered the family group. At one point eight small boys performed a liquid serenade on a series of large whistles of varying tones. In front of them sat an old Arab armed with a long wand. As he lightly tapped the skull of this boy or that, the response was a blast on a whistle. And so, by means of this human organ, he filled the night with a weird melodiousness.

Camp was made by the light of grass flambeaux pulled from the roof of the rest house. It was typical of this life of unaffected simplicity. If a torch was wanted, one pulled a few shingles off the roof. When the house stood roofless, it was time enough to count the cost.

A wave of ultra-violet depression swept over me that evening. The menace of Abyssinians had vanished. Its abrupt removal affected one as though he had been suddenly bereft of the soothing effects of nicotine, hasheesh or the mechanical

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repetition of winding his watch at a precise hour. All watch-winders will understand the feeling of frustration. So, too, had vanished the Dinder River with its variegated life of savagery—another form of narcotic; and Lake lay tossing at Rosaries in the processes of being flooded with increasing and decreasing doses of emetine. The genial peace of the past weeks was fading away like a dream.

The next day, in charge of a couple of local Nimrods, we went after kudu. At the end of a long tedious ride we came to a great dry swamp, where natives were fishing with shovels; fishing with shovels for the armor-plated bullheads. As the water evaporated, the bullheads sank into the mud and waited for the next rains. Whereupon the natives dug them up like potatoes, split and dried them on the bushes. Thousands of long-legged water fowl, dressed in every conceivable color and feathered fashion, watched this proceeding with antagonistic eyes. It was a case of poaching on their preserves.

We sat under a tree and watched a water-hole for a couple of hours. Then a native with a herd of beeves appeared in the direction from which

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we expected the kudu, so we threw up the job with few regrets.

Before reaching the Blue Nile again and joining the camels, we enjoyed several hours of heat which left nothing to the imagination. Even for heat, it was an anti-climax. Then the whole shebang was ferried over the river to Deisa, in a second-hand Noah's Ark.

The Sheik met me, and kneeling, covered my hand with moist kisses, while all the villagers looked on with what might be termed envy, were it not that it sounds like boasting. I was never more embarrassed in my life. "Thank the Lord mistletoe doesn't grow in this country," was my first thought. For a moment the temptation was strong to draw back and exclaim: "Sir, how dare you!" But then it seemed churlish to deny him a little innocent osculation. Such a simple pleasure! So I yielded, and gave him the freedom of my hand. Soap and water would have improved its appearance, but then, as I studied the Sheik, I realized that in this respect it was a fifty-fifty proposition.

"There were elephant about," the Sheik found

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time to advise me, at length, through Abdu. I laughed a dry polite laugh, and enquired:

"About what?"

He would show me, he replied, that afternoon.

So after tea we fared forth, the Sheik and men of Deisa, in quite an impressive cavalcade. Our objective proved to be some large swampy pools, surrounded by forest and connected with the river by an estuary.

"Every evening elephant drink here," the Chief indicated by a series of vivid signs, as we ensconced ourselves behind some fallen timber. It made one thirsty to look at him.

We sat fascinated, and watched the surging life. Water fowl swarmed in countless multitudes; the movements of ducks and geese at times darkened the sky. The pool itself was alive with the thrashing forms of "crocs" and tiger fish. Some submarine monster persisted in amusing himself by slapping the surface of the water with his tail. The result was a series of reports like pistol-shots. Then from the edge of the woods peered a bush buck. Its trepidation was great, and it was not until it had assured itself all was well that it



Rosaries proper.



Lake at least had the satisfaction of coming down with his tropical disease in palatial surroundings.

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stepped timidly across the narrow open space for liquid refreshment. As it left the shelter of the trees its nervousness was painful to watch. Its motives were strangely divided between the desire for water and the instinct of self-preservation, which prompted it to keep its head cocked toward the woods and possible lurking enemies. In a nearby tree sat a wise old gray monkey studying the scene. With methodical thoroughness he examined every point of possible concealment. Then, satisfied, he too proceeded to drink, constantly raising his head to look about, at the same time keeping a weather eye open for "crocs." He was followed by a huge crested eagle. Here, constant vigilance was the price of a drink. Next, seventeen roan marched out nonchalantly from the cover. Their numbers gave them confidence. Moreover, as they drank, sentries faced each point of the compass. Their thirst was slaked in peace. The setting sun cast a lurid light over the scene.

As time was pressing I took one of the roan and accompanied by the men of Deisa went home.

Day broke, to find us following fresh elephant tracks. They wound in and out beneath large

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shady trees, and as the sun swung into the sky smoky shafts of light that somehow recalled the effect of sunbeams in a cathedral pierced the gloom. The ground was covered with lush grass.

Passing through the forest we came at length to a dry swamp covered with reeds a dozen feet high. Then a short distance away, with the abruptness one comes to expect in Africa, several elephant trumpeted. At last, after weeks of tedious trailing, we had arrived! One after the other, two thoughts flashed through my mind. "If only old Lake were here!" Then—"At least one Sheik in Fung Province knows his onions!" But there was no time for introspection. A thudding of hooves from a new direction snapped our minds into other channels at once, and again abruptly Nur, Wild Bill and I found ourselves looking into the blood-shot eyes of a pair of healthy buffalo. It was a painful dilemma. Two hundred yards away the elephant were trumpeting. Fifteen feet away stood the two unwelcome intruders. A shot at the buffalo, and all we'd see of the elephant would be a column of dust disappearing across the landscape, and personally I was consumed with de-

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sire to see those elephant. Thus we stood and stared at each other, awaiting the next move. For maybe two minutes we remained dead-locked. Then, with an explosive snort, the buffalo turned and disappeared from the picture.

At once we were after the elephant again. The tops of their grayish backs floated above the grass like some strange monsters of the deep, while here and there a sinuous trunk was raised aloft to test the air. Far into the sky rose a column of dust. As their vast shapes began to emerge from the grass, I became conscious of a persistent and annoying tugging at my leg. It was impossible to ignore it. I glanced behind me. A puttee had come undone. It was trailing me like a shadow, but unlike a shadow was wrapping itself around every bush and obstacle in sight. Uttering a fantastic imprecation, I paused long enough to tear the thing off. It seemed as though Fate had determined to prevent us from ever catching up with elephant.

They had now moved into the open woods. We were pressing them closely. Then Nur, Bill and I rounded a bush, and there they were a few yards

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away, facing us. What a sight! As elephants go, they were not remarkable for size; but as to quality, one could not complain. From the look of the ivory they appeared to be cows, and the fact that several of them were no bigger than shetland ponies—babes in arms so to speak—made this more evident. There were twelve of them. They were fifteen yards away.

Now there's a fine of a hundred pounds for wantonly killing a cow elephant in the Sudan. Also, the ivory is confiscated and a general aroma of disgrace descends like a pall over the guilty sportsman. The only justification is self-defense—not a difficult position to defend, as a rule, when dealing with irascible female elephants.

Nur and Bill were urging me to shoot, and then my eye happened to fall on the head of the Sheik protruding from a bush. An expression of irresistible longing suffused his features. "Give us—oh! give us, meat for the village," it said in so many words. The hand he had smothered with kisses would not fail him! Not if I knew it! His babies would have elephant meat even if I went to the Bastille for it. "I'm being maliciously assaulted,"

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I murmured. "These bloodthirsty animals, after pursuing us all over the woods, are planning to wrap their trunks around our necks and pull our heads off! I can see it in their eyes. If this isn't self-defense I'm an Irish pacifist!" And selecting one that stood in the rear towering above the others, I gave him the brain shot.

The results were startling. The beast came down on its nose and turned a complete somersault, carrying a couple of fair sized trees down with it. The next two minutes were productive of more chaos than one generally meets with in an equal space of time. Now the fallen animal began to show signs of life. The rest of the herd stood around it, and with trunk and tusk urged it to its feet. Once there, it was wedged in between two stalwart females and hustled away; the rest of them following in riotous flight.

They proceeded after the manner of the buffalo when they had rescued their fallen comrade. It was identical in every respect; the perfection of social co-operation. Evidently the Good Samaritan took his cue from life in the jungle.

Of course we followed. Nothing could have

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prevented us. The trail was broad and clearly defined by much fallen timber, as well as a column of dust that rose many feet into the air. A few hundred yards of this, and the herd suddenly halted. Then two cows hustled the calves and wounded member on to some haven of safety, while four others turned and faced us. At this point we halted too—rather abruptly—and squatting on our haunches awaited eventualities. They now began a slow, sinister advance—again like the buffalo. It would have been quite an impressive sight, if one could have viewed it with more detachment. Their ears stood straight out from their heads—a matter of ten feet from tip to tip; their trunks curled up into the air, their tips darting this way and that in an attempt to locate the taint of their enemies. Nearer and nearer they came—methodically, irresistibly. The boys grew exceedingly nervous; we all became exceedingly nervous.

When they reached a point eighteen yards distant I was through. My appetite for elephant had been gratified. "This time it's self-defense, and no mistake!" flashed through my mind, and pick-

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ing out one that had particularly objectionable tusks I fired point-blank between its eyes.

Without a sound it sank to earth. Now the question was, what would the others do? One shot left in the double-barrelled rifle—and I didn't dare reload, for at the slightest movement they would have descended on us like an avalanche. Moreover, I didn't think of it at the moment. Our harmless little frolic was turning into a rough game! But, after sniffing at their fallen companion for a minute or two and making several unsuccessful attempts at raising her from the ground, they turned and went on their way greatly puzzled as to what it was all about.

The war was over. We sat down on the huge carcass to recuperate. It had been hot work. Our victim was barely breathing. Her final dissolution seemed but a matter of moments. The Sheik sprang on her neck, and was in the act of sinking his spear into her jugular vein when, much to his disgust, I called him off. It seemed like an act of sacrilege—a desecration. It occurred to me it would not be an inhuman act to go away and let her die in peace.

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Before leaving her, a cursory examination taught me more about elephants in two minutes than I'd been able to gather in weeks of reading. Then we drifted away on the trail of the others.

Half an hour later I returned to the corpse with Nur, and reclined nonchalantly against its ribs. With a convulsive movement, entirely unexpected and disconcerting, she lurched to her feet and launched a pass at me with her trunk. Like a jack rabbit, Nur disappeared into a patch of grass, leaving me to do the honors. The cow was far from well, that was obvious. She seemed to be suffering from a very large headache. All her ambition had vanished. She wanted nothing so much as to be left alone. For several minutes we stood eyeing each other. "There's gratitude for you," I thought with disgust. "Give her a chance to die in peace, and that's all the thanks you get." Then she turned on her heel, and staggered off into the woods like an inebriate. And what's more I let her, and breathed a sigh of relief at her departure; for the thought of explaining all the rigmarole to a fellow like Coldthirst suddenly struck me as intricate. So the bellies of the Deisa men

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went empty; and so the dispositions of two pachyderms were irretrievably ruined.

I had fired my last shot in the Sudan. That night we slept at Haroun fifteen miles away.

CHAPTER XXI

*Moving a sick man three hundred and twenty miles.
Civilization. Diabolus on hand to greet us.*

AT eight o'clock next morning Lake rattled in. He was propped up on the rear seat of a motor car resembling a plate of hors d'œuvres—a mixture of odds and ends.

"How goes it?" I enquired.

"If you mean the car, even worse than it looks," he replied wearily.

"I mean you?" I persisted.

"Like oil in the can," he answered. "Before I left, that fellow embalmed me with a hypodermic needle. I'm loaded for the trip."

"Well, before you go off we'd better get on our way," I concluded.

The next thing we knew we were bouncing toward Singa, while Mubarak, Nur, Sherief and Wild Bill with the rest of the boys stood waving

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until they were swallowed up by distance. That was the last we ever saw of the *shikaris*. They melted away like a dream. Of course, Abdu and the contingent from Khartoum would turn up with our baggage sooner or later, but somehow they were different. It was the lean Arab trackers who symbolized to us the Spirit of the Sudan.

All day we thrashed along the camel track, stopping every few miles to revive Lake. The sun grew hotter and hotter; Lake weaker and weaker. About four o'clock we reached Singa, and suddenly it struck me as a ghastly place in which to settle down for a long siege of sickness. At Makwar, thanks to the dam, there was a very creditable hospital with English nurses and everything that conspires to make illness a pleasure.

"Can you hold out for another couple of hours?" I asked Lake.

"I'm so weak I don't give a hoot in hell what happens," he answered.

So, wiring the doctor to meet us at Makwar, we pushed on.

Now we followed the familiar camel track over which we had passed two months before; there's

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where my donkey had collapsed in the road and gone to sleep; there was the familiar rest house; and over in that clump of trees, our first night out, Lake had revealed the fact that he walked in his sleep. Makwar rose on the skyline, flat and dull in spite of the rosy tints lavishly scattered by the setting sun. There was the dam, the railroad station, the wide dusty streets. It was all unspeakably drab and monotonous now. Our Romantic Chariot had a flat tire.

We drew up at the small hotel. The camels would take ten days to cover that same one hundred and sixty miles that lay behind us, but by the same token the aeroplane had taken only two hours. The doctor met us.

"Sorry," he said, "I can't place your man in the hospital for a couple of days, so I booked a room for you here. There's only one, but you can have a cot on the verandah," he added reassuringly. Then he and a trained nurse took charge of Lake, and performed incantations over him.

It was a spacious verandah on which I slept, giving onto a pleasant flower garden. One end of it served as an open air dining-room. From this

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I was shielded by a screen. Three men and three ladies were dining there. They were English. Their conversation dwelt largely with the question of debt settlements. By no exercise of the imagination could it be construed as flattering to the land of my birth. Yet who was I to rise up in my pajamas in rebuttal. Champagne corks popped. They discussed world problems with an abandon that threw me into a moist panic. Here, war clouds loomed; there, delicate situations blossomed, while a general pall of gloom seemed to hover over all. The world's financial markets were apparently on the verge of collapse. The Germans were capturing world markets, and a million communists armed to the teeth were disguised as waiters in London. Gunmen were in control of Chicago. We were home. Diabolus was at the station to greet us.

Then the dinner party adjourned to the genial garden and a friendly game of poker. Only yesterday I had been throwing cold hands with the herd of elephant. We all seemed to be playing at games—each to his own fancy.

At dawn I lay half asleep and waited for

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Scotch-Irish Ali to come and say: "Gentlemen's tea!" But he didn't come; nor did Abdu appear shortly to bustle us off with the *shikaris*. It was all sadly different.

Then I entered into a financial session with the Sheik. He alone had remained unchanged. His palm was moist and clammy and an aromatic odor—like cinnamon—still drifted from his person. Possibly it was not the identical odor with which he had greeted us, but it was near enough to create the illusion of permanency.

Makwar had changed. It was not the same place. The buildings and dusty streets were the same, but some intangible essence had departed.

Before, it had been a jumping-off place; now, it looked like an internment camp. And the more I looked at it the less diverting it appeared as a headquarters for a rollicking case of dysentery.

The hospital at Khartoum was the quintessence of comfort. It was the kind of place a man would travel miles to be sick in. "By tomorrow's train we go to Khartoum," I decided.

I mentioned the idea to the doctor. He admitted it was a good one—if you didn't care what you

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said—and jolly well refused to be responsible for Lake if he was moved.

“The man’s sick!” he exclaimed. “It’s one hundred and sixty miles to Khartoum—a twelve-hour ride.”

“If he stays around a place like this, he’ll be sicker,” I suggested. “He’d have a case of cerebral blind staggers in a week. We’ll go to Khartoum.”

That evening I took a last look at the dam. The half-finished wall of masonry stood out with grim distinctness against a flamboyant sunset. Shifts were changing; streams of men and women were drifting away. The river was full of bronze Apollos removing the marks of a long day’s toil; fabricators of ashlar granite, builders for England.

It didn’t seem necessary to tell Lake he was about to enjoy another change of scene. Why bother him? In the morning an ancient Arab brought round a two-wheeled push-cart, no less ancient. It was the only conveyance we could muster—and into this we bundled Lake. The wheels of this strange perambulator were a source of wonder to us all, not excepting its owner. It

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gave one vertigo to look at them. The Theory of Relativity might have explained their motion, though it almost seemed one step beyond such a simple explanation.

"Where now?" said Lake.

"Khartoum," I told him.

"Where then?"

"A cool room."

"Amen!"

And we trundled him over to the train.

Somehow we got through the next twelve hours. The doctor in charge of the Civil Hospital met us with a litter, and ten minutes later Lake was lying in a large airy room with a ceiling ever so high. In a trice he was bereft of the amazing pajamas in which he had traveled one way or another for three hundred and twenty miles, and lay wan but peaceful in the midst of an Æsculapian oasis. Our pilgrimage was over! We had attained Mecca at last!

CHAPTER XXII

Convert camp equipment into champagne. Drink it. Easiest way to carry it. My word!

FOR three days I was in a state of mental chaos as to whether or not to cable Lake's family. Then the "increasing and decreasing" injections of emetine suddenly prevailed, and the battle was over. At once Lake began to mend; his voice grew stronger, while his language became positively robust whenever anyone approached with a hypodermic needle. "You can cut out your damn tattooing!" he would yell, on the verge of open rebellion. Yes. Lake was much better. It did one's heart good to hear him.

The life of Khartoum drifted on apace. There was a race meet; an occasional dinner with McFee and the officers of the Medical Corps; and always a daily gossip with Coldthirst. An elaborate ex-

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pedition up the White Nile returned with the news of a *shikari* killed by an elephant. Somebody ran—and it wasn't the *shikari*. One day a young man wrote Coldthirst enquiring as to the best place to go for the purpose of ivory poaching.

"Can you beat that!" Coldthirst exclaimed, moping his brow. "He writes the Game Warden to find out where to go to break the law! And he takes a page to tell how intrepid and hardy he is. He says he's 'as hard as nails.' "

"Evidently he thinks you're as soft as butter," I consoled him. "Moreover what better source could he go to for first-hand information?"

Then one morning I was wakened at dawn by a familiar voice at my bedside: "Gentlemen's tea," it said, and when I looked up there was Ali himself, with the morning libation of tannic acid. Behind him stood Abdu, and Elhardi the skinner, and Fadl the boy. They had just arrived from Makwar.

"What will the gentlemen do with the camp furniture?" Abdu enquired.

"What does one generally do with old furni-

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ture?" I countered, having in mind some convenient scrap-heap.

"We can hold an auction in the native quarter, if the gentlemen please," said Abdu,—“many officers do.”

"Good!" I agreed. It sounded fantastic enough to be interesting.

I reached the hospital that morning, to find Lake all of a flutter. "I'm coming down to the hotel tonight," was his greeting. "I'm cured — discharged. We can be off for Cairo anytime now. I've just been looking up a trip in the Malay Peninsula. They say there's still some shooting on the Island of Penang. I think I'll drift over there. How about you?"

"For the moment I think I'll drift over to the native quarter," I answered, evading the issue. "We're holding an auction there, you know."

Abdu was waiting for me, and through devious byways we penetrated into that portion of Khar-toum where the architecture was simple, and most of one's domestic life was carried on in the middle of the road. At length we came to an open space at the intersection of two streets, and there, com-

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plete to the last detail, our camp had been set up. It was startling. The ground sheet was down, the cots in place; between them, the table was set as though for dinner; while conveniently placed in the shade were our two steamer chairs.

Around the whole surged a mob of vari-colored bargain hunters, while the auctioneer—a dynamic Arab slightly tinged with a Semitic strain—violently jangled a dinner bell, and with bland words pointed out the hidden values that lay before their eyes.

I sank into one of the steamer chairs. The scene suddenly shifted. I was on the bluff at Erief El Dik listening to the throbbing flight of the weaver birds; then I crouched in the shadows near the water-hole at Galegu with Nur, Sherief and Wild Bill. We were having hysterics over something, and rolling about on the sand. But this was no moment for frivolity—the moon was going into an eclipse—dying. Come on boys! Squat down in a ring! Tear off a few pages of the Koran! Bring her back to life! That's the stuff! There she comes again; clear as a bell. Good men!

It was Abdu's voice that jerked me back to the



Farewell—a long farewell!

LAST OF THE DINDER RIVER

native quarter of Khartoum. "That man has bid eight pounds for the lot," he was saying.

"It's his," I answered, and without looking at it again got up and walked away.

That evening we had a farewell dinner. Even Lake was there, though without the knowledge of the doctor.

"Bring eight pounds worth of champagne," I instructed the waiter.

"Why all the gaiety?" asked Lake.

"There's nothing gay about it," I informed him. "It's merely the last of that strip of sand known as the Dinder River. For once it's going to be wet." The waiter filled the glasses.

"'Drink' " I quoted, "'For we know not whence we came, nor why ;
Drink ! For we know not why we go, nor whence.' "

"My word!" said McFee.

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